THE INTERNET

WITH AN ALL-NEW INTRODUCTION BY JONATHAN ROSS

APPROVED BY THE "COMICRAFT" AUTHORITY

VOLUME 01

WOUNDED ANIMALS

STARKINGS · MORITAT · LADRÖNN · ROSHELL · COOK

5

4

ELEPHANTMEN

RICHARD STARKINGS
STORY & LETTERING
BOO COOK
FRONT COVER ART
MORITAT
LEAD ARTIST
J.G. ROSHELL
DESIGN
A "COMICRAFT" PRODUCTION
"ELEPHANTMEN"...
They WALK like us!
They TALK like us!
WOUNDED ANIMALS
51999
9 781607 063377
ISBN: 978-1-60706-337-7
FUEL, COMPRESSED, TRIOXANE
ELEPHANTMEN, VOL. 1: WOUNDED ANIMALS REVISED & EXPANDED.
First Printing.
Published by Image Comics, Inc.
Office of publication: 2134 Allsont Way, Second floor, Berkeley, California 94704.
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ELEPHANTMEN

Tales from "Mystery City"™ & the World of HIP FLASK

image

LIFE

OF SURPRISES

SUB

5

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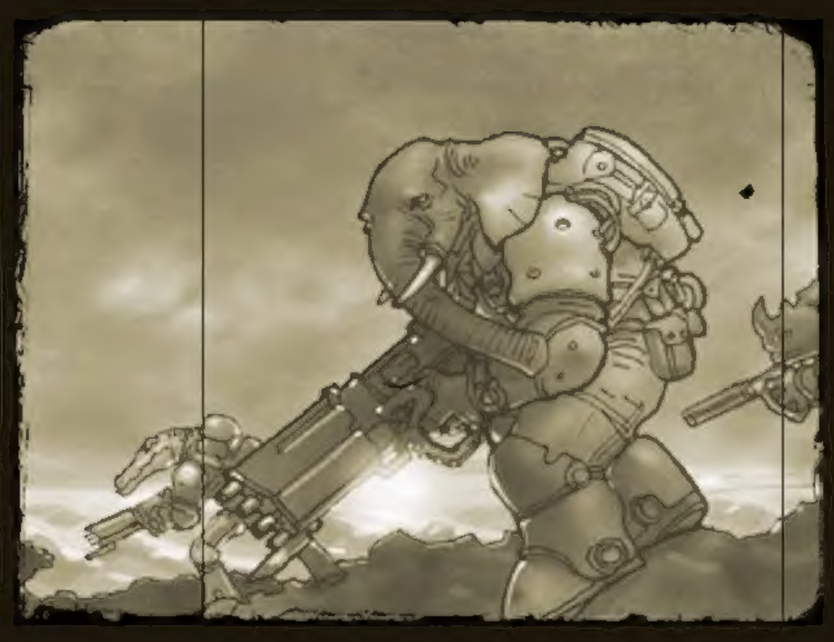
JULY
2006
#001

See The Elephant

By

STARKINGS · MORITAT · COMICRAFT · LADRÖNN



a ROOMFUL of BANANAS

INTRODUCTION by JONATHAN ROSS

I NEARLY DIDN'T give this book a chance. Let's be honest – at first glance ELEPHANTMEN looks kind of silly. That's exactly what I thought when I first picked it up – "This looks kind of silly." And I went to put it straight back down again and move on to one of those non-silly, completely believable comics that I read – like the one about the mutant ex-soldier with a skeleton made of indestructible steel and claws that poke out in a fight, or the scientist who turns big and green if you piss him off, or the flying man with a magic ring that can make anything he thinks of but just HATES the colour yellow, so really all you got to do to defeat him is trick him to go into a room filled with bananas then lock the yellow door. Those ones.

So despite my great love of comic books and my willingness to get on board with all and any fantastical premises, no matter how dumb they seem in the cold light of day, I was prepared to dismiss ELEPHANTMEN on the grounds that it looked kind of – well, forgive me, but daft.

Hippos swapping smart one-liners with leggy lovelys? Rhinos in waistcoats? Crocodiles drinking martinis in bars? Elephants hanging around on street corners? Give me a break!

Sure, it was a cute high concept idea, but it also looked a little like one of those books that swamped the market after the Teenage Mutant Ninja Thingamabobs were big back in the '80s. For a while there you couldn't move for Radioactive Ferrets and Samurai Gophers and Kung Fu Rabbits filling up the shelves. So I didn't know if I had the space on my reading list for Grown-up Genetically Altered Hard Boiled Heffalumps.

But even as I went to put it back on the shelf, something about ELEPHANTMEN made me give it another chance. The cover of that first issue was pretty terrific, so it was probably the art – I flicked it open and WOW!! Beautiful, lush, nicely stylised and wonderfully coloured. It's almost always the art that first gets me into a new book, and Moritat's an ace. But if it's the art that gets you in the door it's the writing that keeps you there, and the world that Richard Starkings has created in ELEPHANTMEN is tremendous.

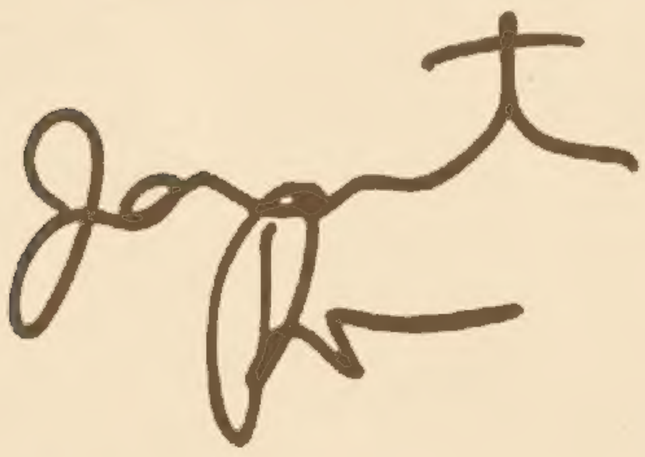
It has the babes of course, and they seemed both plentiful and bountiful, as you would expect in an Image comic – but it also had a fabulously realised world. I love comics that tell a story but offer hints and clues at a far bigger one, and it was easy to see even in that first issue that Richard had it all worked out. Where they came from, what they had been through, what they were hoping for. In short, it had characters, well fleshed-out developed characters in

way out interesting situations. It's a sci-fi soap opera, that's what it is, and that realisation was enough to help me overcome my desire to be seen as a serious, mature graphic-novel-loving reader of THE COMICS JOURNAL and start collecting.

And I haven't regretted it once. You see, in this post-DARK KNIGHT, post-WATCHMEN world of ours, a lot of modern comics are gritty and sexy and dark and faux-sophisticated but they forget one vital ingredient - they forget to be FUN. ELEPHANTMEN manages to tick all those boxes, and that's what makes it a surprisingly rare treat these days. That's not to say it's immature or uncomplicated or predictable - it's none of those things, exclusively. But it gets the balance right - there are laughs as well as jolts, nicely sketched characters with small contemplative moments alongside big visceral action scenes - it's got plenty of meat, and more than enough veg as well. So while my initial impression wasn't completely misguided - because there's no escaping the fact that it is kind of silly - the quality of the talent involved and the skill and inspiration and LOVE that's been poured into the books by all those involved allows it to work on the serious level as well.

Oh, and before I go, there's one more reason why I love ELEPHANTMEN - my kids, who were born with better taste then I've spent a lifetime achieving, read and adore it... and the family that reads trashy mad glorious comic books together always has plenty to talk about at dinnertime.

So do yourself a favour - give ELEPHANTMEN a chance. It is a little bit silly but it's a whole lot of fucking awesome as well.



Jonathan Ross
September 2010

Below: Jonathan Ross shows off artwork for TURF...by Jonathan Ross!

Left: Jonathan drops by the Elephantmen booth to audition for booth babe. We think Nova's spot is secure.

Jonathan Ross OBE has been paid inordinate amounts of money for being a bit silly and saying daft things on British radio and TV in a wily and winsome way for over 20 years. His chat show FRIDAY NIGHT WITH JONATHAN ROSS recently ended its run on BBC AMERICA, but while he is inbetween late night slots, Jonathan has created his very own Image Comic Book, TURF with Tommy Lee Edwards. Download his book WHY DO I SAY THESE THINGS from iTunes and, if you can, check out his documentary IN SEARCH OF STEVE DITKO in which he tracks down the legendary reclusive SPIDER-MAN artist.

BE WARNED!

KEEP YOUR CHILDREN AWAY FROM THESE MONSTERS!

ELEPHANTMEN

image

Tales from Mystery City™ & the World of HIP FLASK®

SEE THE ELEPHANT

By

STARKINGS · MORITAT · COMICRAFT · LADRONN

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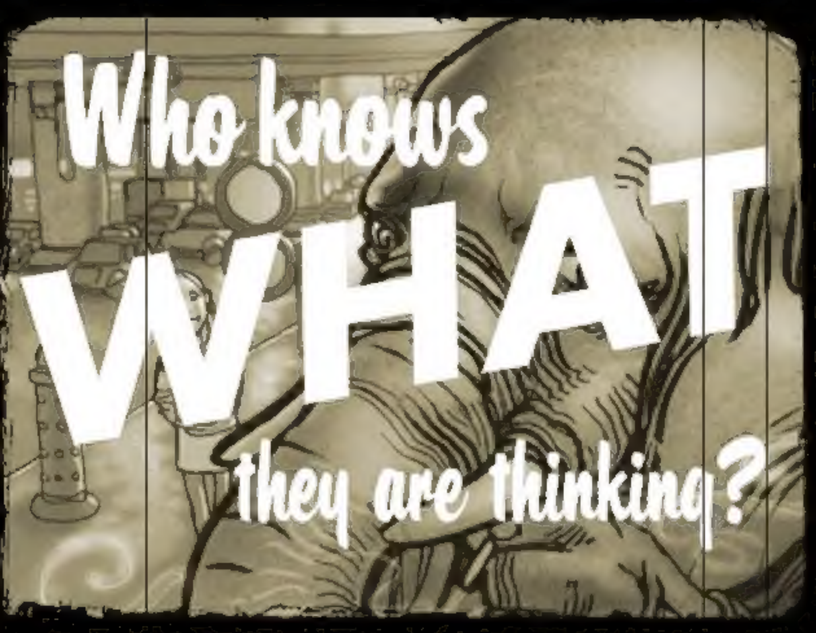

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SEE THE ELEPHANT

HOOTERS

ASK ABOUT OUR CRAB LEGS

5

321

HOOTERS HOOTERS HOOTERS HOOTERS

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Another Great & Tall Tale from Mystery City by Richard Starkings and Moritat

黒檀鰐皮
エボニー ひで

ARE YOU ALLOWED IN THERE?

UM... YEAH, I'M, AH--

ONLY MY MOM TOLD ME THAT DAD WASN'T ALLOWED IN THERE ANY MORE. SHE SAYS IT'S *"IMMORAL."*

AND HE SHOULD BE ***ASHAMED.***

HEY, DO YOU PICK YOUR NOSE?

321
I DON'T NEED TO...
I CAN PUT MY NOSE IN MY MOUTH, CHECK IT OUT...
TA-DAAAA!
HAHAHAHAHAHAHA
EWWWW! THAT'S TOTALLY GROSS!

BRITANNIA

ANYWAYS, I CAN TOUCH MY NOSE WITH MY *TONGUE*.

SEE?

IT'S THE SAME THING.

YOU'RE FUNNY.

BUT MY FRIEND CHASE SAYS YOU GUYS ARE ***MONSTERS.***

ARE YOU A MONSTER?

UH...

NORTH AFRICA: 2241

FTOOM

KATABRAM

FTOOM

AIEEEEEEE

"DO YOU WASH BEHIND YOUR EARS...?"

HUH--?

I BET YOU DON'T, OTHERWISE YOU'D BE IN THE BATHROOM, LIKE, *FOREVER.*

HEY, UH, LISTEN, KID... WHERE'S YOUR MOM--?

SHE'S ACROSS THE STREET, DOING ALICIA'S NAILS.

SUB 85

IT'S OKAY, I DON'T WASH BEHIND *MY* EARS EITHER.

SO, WHAT'S YOUR *NAME?*

I'M *SAVANNAH...*

Y'KNOW, LIKE THE *AFRICAN* SAVANNAH...

UH... MY NAME IS *EBONY*.

EBONY? *COOL*!

I BET YOU'VE *BEEN* TO AFRICA.

YEAH, BUT IT WAS A *LONG* TIME AGO NOW...

TEACHER MICHELLE SAYS ELEPHANTS ARE THE BIGGEST ANIMALS ON LAND, BUT I THINK MY DAD'S NEARLY AS BIG AS YOU.

HE'S SIX FOOT TALL, AND GRAN SAYS HE WAS A *REALLY* BIG BABY.

I BET *YOU* WERE A BIG BABY TOO.

OH YEAH...

MAPPO: NORTH AFRICA: 2224

NOW THERE'S A FACE ONLY A MOTHER COULD LOVE...

OF COURSE, DOCTOR NIKKEN.

THERE IS *NO* PLACE FOR A MOTHER'S LOVE HERE.

THEY ARE *MY* CREATIONS. THESE WOMEN ARE MERELY VESSELS.

THEY ARE *MAPPO'S CHILDREN* NOW...

YES...

MAPPO WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU...

MAPPO WILL TAKE CARE OF *ALL* OF YOU.

"SO WHAT WAS IT LIKE?"

Y'KNOW... AFRICA.

DO YOU GET TO GO HOME OFTEN?

AH-- AFRICA'S NOT MY HOME..

AND IT'S NOT A PLACE *I'D* LIKE TO REVISIT ANY TIME SOON.

NORTH AFRICA · 2240

#40

YOU MONKEYS ARE FIGHTING LIKE CHILDREN...

THIS IS A FIGHT TO THE DEATH!

HE'S YOUR ENEMY AND HE WANTS TO KILL YOU!

YOU WILL SHOW NO MERCY.

KILL OR BE KILLED...

KRTAK

WARGH!!

IT'S THE LAW OF THE *JUNGLE.*

I'M SURPRISED YOU *MONKEYS* AREN'T MORE FAMILIAR WITH IT.

"DO YOU HAVE A GIRLFRIEND?"

EBONY?

DO YOU HAVE A GIRL-FRIEND?

UH, NO. NO, I DON'T HAVE A GIRLFRIEND.

GOOD.

IF YOU LIKE, I COULD BE YOUR GIRLFRIEND.

YOU KIND OF LOOK LIKE YOU NEED ONE.

U.N.REHAB.-WEST AFRICA-2248

WHAT IN THE WINDS HAPPENED HERE--?

EBENEZER?!

EBONY... HE TRIED TO... HE WAS HANGING...

EBENEZER-- *EBONY*... THIS ISN'T THE WAY IT HAS TO BE...

YOUR WORLD IS NOT YET MADE...

ALL THINGS WILL *CHANGE*, EBENEZER.

EVEN THE FEELINGS INSIDE.

YES, SAHARA, SO YOU *SAY*.

BUT ONLY TWO YEARS AGO I WOULD HAVE SNAPPED YOU IN HALF LIKE A TWIG.

WE ARE SOLDIERS... TRAINED TO KILL.

THAT IS WHAT WE WERE DESIGNED FOR.

THAT IS THE WAY WE WERE MADE.

IT DOESN'T JUST GO AWAY.

NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE MIGHT WANT IT TO.

"ARE YOU AN ANIMAL OR ARE YOU A MAN?"

I GUESS YOU'RE BOTH, RIGHT?

WE WENT TO SEE THE ELEPHANTS AT THE *CIRCUS* ONE TIME, BUT THEY WEREN'T LIKE YOU.

THEY HAD SMALLER EARS.

THEY WERE *INDIAN* ELEPHANTS. I *KNOW* THE DIFFERENCE.

PLUS, THOSE GUYS WALKED ON ALL FOURS AND COULDN'T TALK.

DADDY SAYS THAT IF AN ELEPHANT STAMPEDES, IT CAN KILL YOU.

DID YOU EVER KILL ANYBODY?

NORTH AFRICA · 2241

"DID YOU EVER STAMPEDE?"

DOK

PTUK

FTOOM

LOOK, KID, YOU REALLY SHOULDN'T BE *TALKING* TO ME...

ISN'T IT GETTING A LITTLE LATE FOR YOU--?

I MEAN, WELL, I'M BUSY, I HAVE TO GET ALONG...

I KNOW, YOU HAVE ***WORK*** TO DO.

GROWN UPS NEVER HAVE TIME TO TALK AND PLAY.

HERE...

SAVANNAH?!

GET AWAY FROM HIM!

OH MY GOD! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!

WE WERE JUST TALKING, MOM...

I'M HIS NEW GIRLFRIEND!

YOU JUST STAY AWAY FROM HER!

IF I SEE YOU AROUND MY DAUGHTER AGAIN, I'LL REPORT YOU!

BUT, MOM... HE'S AN ELEPHANT...

AND YOU SAID ANIMALS ARE OUR FRIENDS...

OH -- NEVER MIND WHAT I SAID, SAVANNAH--

UH, SORRY, EBONY...

'BYE.

NOTHING CHANGES, SAHARA...
≥HURH≤ "ALL THINGS WILL CHANGE, EBENEZER."

Don't Forget
To Wash
behinyoure.
eers

SAVANNAH

"A HOPEFUL SOCIETY HAS INSTITUTIONS OF SCIENCE AND MEDICINE THAT DO NOT CUT ETHICAL CORNERS AND THAT RECOGNIZE THE MATCHLESS VALUE OF EVERY LIFE.

"TONIGHT I ASK YOU TO PASS LEGISLATION TO PROHIBIT THE MOST EGREGIOUS ABUSES OF MEDICAL RESEARCH: HUMAN CLONING IN ALL ITS FORMS; CREATING OR IMPLANTING EMBRYOS FOR EXPERIMENTS; CREATING HUMAN-ANIMAL HYBRIDS; AND BUYING, SELLING OR PATENTING HUMAN EMBRYOS.

"HUMAN LIFE IS A GIFT FROM OUR CREATOR, AND THAT GIFT SHOULD NEVER BE DISCARDED, DEVALUED OR PUT UP FOR SALE."

GEORGE W. BUSH
STATE OF THE UNION
ADDRESS 2006

"NATURE FALLS UNDER MY COMMAND NOW."

DOCTOR KAZUSHI NIKKEN
2218

SLEEPWALKER

JUST ANOTHER GUY NAMED JOE

image

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A Tale from Mystery City

STARKINGS · MORITAT

HIP FLASK

JUST ANOTHER GUY NAMED JOE

THAT'S RIGHT, JOE, KEEP YOUR HEAD DOWN...

DON'T LOOK UP, DON'T LET ANYONE CATCH YOUR EYE.

WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T STAND STILL. JUST KEEP MOVING.

MIND YOUR OWN FREAKIN' BUSINESS, JOE.

A Tale from Mystery City by Starkings and Moritat

DON'T THINK ABOUT HOW THE WORLD CHANGED...

DON'T THINK ABOUT THE MUNTS... SORRY, THE "UNHUMANS," "THE ELEPHANTMEN."

STAY TUNED FOR MORE ON LIFE AS WE JOIN MOST REGINA MI

DON'T THINK ABOUT OBADIAH HORN AND THE CORPORATE EMPIRE HE BUILT ON THE BACKS OF SAD SAPS LIKE YOU.

DON'T THINK ABOUT ALL THE JOBS TAKEN AWAY FROM HONEST AMERICANS TO PROVIDE THOSE... ANIMALS WITH A LIVELIHOOD.

DON'T THINK ABOUT THE CORNER STORES AND SMALL BUSINESSES THE GOVERNMENT ASSIGNED TO THEM.

DON'T THINK ABOUT THE WAY THEY LOOK AT YOU.

THE WAY THEY LOOK DOWN ON YOU...

MAYBE THEY THINK YOU'RE JUST ANOTHER JOE...

YEAH, MAYBE THEY THINK THEY'RE BIGGER THAN YOU, STRONGER THAN YOU...

...BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE THEM SMARTER THAN YOU.

IT DOESN'T MAKE THEM BETTER...

SO JUST PUT THEM OUT OF YOUR MIND, JOE...

DON'T THINK ABOUT HOW THE WORLD CHANGED...

DON'T THINK ABOUT IT.

THINK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE, JOE.

WHUH?!

腰水筒

ヒップフレスコ

EXCUSE ME...

DON'T THINK OF AN ELEPHANTMAN.

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#002

"AND GOD SAID, LET THE EARTH BRING FORTH THE LIVING CREATURE AFTER HIS KIND, CATTLE, AND CREEPING THING, AND BEAST OF THE EARTH AFTER HIS KIND: AND IT WAS SO.

"AND GOD MADE THE BEAST OF THE EARTH AFTER HIS KIND, AND CATTLE AFTER THEIR KIND, AND EVERY THING THAT CREEPETH UPON THE EARTH AFTER HIS KIND: AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD.

"AND GOD SAID, LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR IMAGE, AFTER OUR LIKENESS: AND LET THEM HAVE DOMINION OVER THE FISH OF THE SEA, AND OVER THE FOWL OF THE AIR, AND OVER THE CATTLE, AND OVER ALL THE EARTH, AND OVER EVERY CREEPING THING THAT CREEPETH UPON THE EARTH.

"SO GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE, IN THE IMAGE OF GOD CREATED HE HIM; MALE AND FEMALE CREATED HE THEM. AND GOD BLESSED THEM, AND GOD SAID UNTO THEM, BE FRUITFUL, AND MULTIPLY, AND REPLENISH THE EARTH, AND SUBDUE IT: AND HAVE DOMINION OVER THE FISH OF THE SEA, AND OVER THE FOWL OF THE AIR, AND OVER EVERY LIVING THING THAT MOVETH UPON THE EARTH."

GENESIS 1:24-28

BEHEMOTH

"Look at the Behemoth, which I made along with you and which feeds on grass like an Ox.

"What STRENGTH he has in his loins, what POWER in the muscles of his belly!

"His tail sways like a Cedar; the sinews of his thighs are close-knit."
JOB 40:15-17

AND LEVIATHAN

STARKINGS · GOD · HENRY FLINT · MORITAT

"Can you pull in the Leviathan with a fishhook or tie down his tongue with a rope?

"Can you put a cord through his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook?

"Will he keep begging you for mercy? Will he speak to you with gentle words?

"Will he make an agreement with you for you to take him as your slave for life?"
JOB 41:1-4

"Can you make a pet of him like a bird, or put him on a leash for your girls?

"Will traders barter for him? Will they divide him up among the merchants?"
JOB 41:5-6

"The bones of the Behemoth are tubes of bronze, his limbs like rods of iron.

He ranks first among the works of God, yet his Maker can approach him with his sword."
JOB 40:18-19

"Can you fill the Leviathan's hide with harpoons or his head with fishing spears?

"If you lay a hand on him, you will remember the struggle and never do it again!"
JOB 41:7-8

"Any hope of subduing him is false; the mere sight of him is overpowering."
JOB 41:10

"No one is fierce enough to rouse him. Who then is able to stand against me?"
JOB 41:10

"Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me."
JOB 41:11

KEEP OUT

"I will not fail to speak of the Leviathan's limbs, his strength and his graceful form.

"Who can strip off his outer coat? Who would approach him with a bridle?"
JOB 41:12-13

"Who dares open the doors of Leviathan's mouth, ringed about with his fearsome teeth?

"His back has rows of shields tightly sealed together; each is so close to the next that no air can pass between."
JOB 41:14-16

"They are joined fast to one another; they cling together and cannot be parted.

"Leviathan's snorting throws out flashes of light; his eyes are like the rays of dawn.

"Firebrands stream from his mouth; sparks of fire shoot out."
JOB 41:17-19

"Smoke pours from his nostrils as from a boiling pot over a fire of reeds.

"His breath sets coals ablaze, and flames dart from his mouth.

"Strength resides in his neck; dismay goes before him.

"The folds of his flesh are tightly joined; they are firm and immovable.
JOB 41:20-23

"His chest is hard as rock, hard as a lower millstone.

"When he rises up, the mighty are terrified; they retreat before his thrashing."
JOB 41:24-25

"He makes the depths churn like a boiling cauldron and stirs up the sea like a pot of ointment.

"Behind him he leaves a glistening wake; one would think the deep had white hair."
JOB 41:31-32

"Nothing on earth is the Leviathan's equal —
a creature without fear." JOB 41:33

"He looks down on all that are haughty;
he is king over all that are proud." JOB 41:34

"The hills bring the Behemoth their produce, and all the wild animals play nearby.

"Under the lotus plants he lies, hidden among the reeds in the marsh.

"The lotuses conceal him in their shadow; the poplars by the stream surround him.

"When the river rages, he is not alarmed; he is secure, though the Jordan should surge against his mouth.

"Can anyone capture him by the eyes, or trap him and pierce his nose?
JOB 41:20-24

"May that night be barren; may no shout of joy be heard in it.

"May those who curse days curse that day, those who are ready to rouse Leviathan.
JOB 3:7-8

image
AUG 06
#2

THEY WERE NOT JUST A BUNCH of PRETTY FACES...

They were the ELEPHANTMEN!™

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THIS ISSUE:

THINGS GET UGLY

2 COMPLETE STORIES!

1 AMAZING ADVENTURE of BIBLICAL PROPORTIONS!

By STARKINGS & HENRY FLINT

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INSIDE: YOU MUST NOT MISS SHOCK CROC! MOUTH ALMIGHTY MEETS MIGHTY MOUTH

By RICHARD ALAN STARKINGS and MORITAT

"THE PRESS IS NOT ONLY FREE, IT IS POWERFUL. THAT POWER IS OURS. IT IS THE PROUDEST THAT MAN CAN ENJOY."

BENJAMIN DISRAELI

1804-1881

YES! YOU ARE LISTENING TO THE HERMAN STRUMM SHOW, NOW STREAMING AROUND THE PLANET AROUND THE CLOCK ON DOGSTAR RADIO --

WOOF!

SO, RABBI, WHO DO WE HAVE IN THE STUDIO TODAY?

WE HAVE ELIJAH DELANEY COMING TO VISIT US TODAY...

THAT'S RIGHT, THAT'S RIGHT, OUR VERY OWN ELEPHANTMAN -- UH -- CROCODILEMAN -- HELL, RABBI, WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO CALL HIM? "DELANEY?!" WHAT DOES HE THINK HE IS -- IRISH?

I DON'T KNOW, HERMAN -- WHY DON'T YOU TRY CALLING HIM ELIJAH? OR "SIR?"

EARTH ORBIT · 2260 DOGSTAR ONE

Y'KNOW, YOU'RE RIGHT, HE'S, WHAT, 550 POUNDS, ALL MUSCLE, HE'S GOT A MOUTHFUL OF RAZOR SHARP TEETH... "SIR" SOUNDS ABOUT RIGHT...

AND I DO **NOT** WANT TO OFFEND THE ELEPHANTMEN, AT THE LAST COUNT THERE WERE, WHAT, **FIFTEEN THOUSAND** OF THESE GUYS?

HELL, I KNOW MY PLACE.

I SERIOUSLY DOUBT THAT, HERMAN...

THIS IS DOGSTAR FIVE TO DOGSTAR CONTROL... WE HAVE A V-I-P ONBOARD, PLEASE CONFIRM CLEARANCE FOR DOCKING, OVER...

ROGER, DOGSTAR FIVE... CLEARANCE CONFIRMED, YOU'RE GOOD TO GO.

YOU'RE LISTENING TO SATELLITE RADIO...

ACTIVE & IMAGE COMICS present:

SHOCK CROC!

By STARKINGS & MORITAT with COMICRAFT

HERMAN STRUMM & RABBI created by JOE CASEY

HE'S ON HIS WAY, YES, WE'LL BE THERE IN THIRTY SECONDS, MAX...

WHERE ARE THE STRUMMPETS AT...?

OKAY, GUYS AND GALS... I'VE NEVER HAD AN ELEPHANTMAN ON THE SHOW BEFORE, BUT, HELL, AS I KEPT TELLING MY EX-WIFE, THERE'S A FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING...

...AND OH-MY-GOD, IS THIS GUY **BIG.**

HERMAN ★ STR M

NOW, THAT'S SOMETHING I **KNOW** YOU NEVER HEARD FROM YOUR WIFE!

STRUMM

ELIJAH, I WANT TO WELCOME YOU TO THE HERMAN STRUMM SHOW, IT IS AN HONOR AND A PRIVELEGE TO HAVE YOU HERE, SIR...

YEAH, I HEARD THAT GAG...

WELL, COME ON, YOU TELL ME... WHAT *DO* I CALL YOU... DO YOU GUYS GET ALL *PISSY* IF WE USE THE *'E'* WORD?

ELEPHANTMEN?

BECAUSE WE ALL LOOK THE SAME, RIGHT?

OH, HERE WE GO, RABBI. NEXT THING HE'S GONNA ASK ME IF ALL JEWS LOOK ALIKE --

WHICH, OF COURSE, WE *DO!*

JUST *IGNORE* HIM, ELIJAH...

SO, HOW TALL *ARE* YOU, LIKE EIGHT FEET?

YEAH, MAN, I MEAN, I THOUGHT I WAS TALL...

EIGHT FOOT... THREE, I THINK... *WITHOUT* BOOTS.

SKRUMM

WITHOUT YOUR BOOTS? MM-HM... I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THAT. YES, SIR...

TUCK THOSE BOOBS BACK IN, RABBI, HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE THE MANEATER HERE...

WHICH RAISES ANOTHER QUESTION, ELI... DID YOU EVER TASTE HUMAN FLESH?

HERMAN! WHAT KIND OF A QUESTION IS THAT?!

IT'S THE KIND OF QUESTION OUR LISTENERS WANT TO KNOW THE ANSWER TO, RABBI!

NO.

OKAY, FINE...

BUT TELL ME, WHAT IS WITH ALL THE BIBLICAL NAMES...? ELIJAH, EBENEZER, HIERONYMOUS, OBADIAH, JEDIDIAH...

WERE THOSE *MAPPO* GUYS RELIGIOUS FREAKS OR WHAT?

THEY WERE *FREAKS* ALL RIGHT, HERMAN...

BUT I BET YOU GET LETTERS FROM NUTTERS, RIGHT? RELIGIOUS NUTS.

I LOOKED YOU UP ON THE SLATE -- NOT YOU PERSONALLY, BUT CROCODILES IN GENERAL -- AND, IN THE BIBLE THEY CALL YOU *LEVIATHAN*, RIGHT?

I GUESS THE EGYPTIANS AND THE JEWS LOOKED UPON CROCS AS GODS --

WHAT?

YOU'RE LOOKING AT ME LIKE YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME, MAN...

I GUESS IF YOU *READ* IT SOMEWHERE, IT MUST BE *TRUE*, RIGHT?

DON'T GO THERE, ELIJAH...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GETTING AT, ELI, BUT I ALSO READ THAT CROCODILES AND *HIPPOS* ARE LIKE, NATURAL ENEMIES.

WHAT'S THE NAME OF THAT TOUGH GUY WHO WORKS FOR THE INFORMATION AGENCY--? *HIP FLASK*, RIGHT?

SO, DO YOU GET INTO FIGHTS ALL THE TIME WITH THE *HIPPOMEN?*

AM I RIGHT IN THINKING THAT'S HOW YOU LOST YOUR *TAIL?*

I'M JUST SAYING, YOU CAN'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ...

I KNOW, I KNOW, I SHOULD SEE THE *OTHER* GUY, BUT DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT...

SEE, *YOU* LOST YOUR *TAIL*...

BUT HERE ON THE HERMAN STRUMM SHOW WE HAVE PLENTY OF TAIL FOR EVERYONE!

OH, BAD SEGUE, HERMAN, THAT'S **BAD.**

STRUM

SO, TELL ME, ELI, DO THESE GIRLS MAKE YOU HOT? OR ARE YOU STILL WAITING FOR THE RIGHT GALIGATOR TO COME ALONG?

YOU ***CANNOT*** TELL ME YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO SINK YOUR ***TEETH*** INTO THESE BEAUTIES.

BOY, I AM ***SO*** GLAD I HAD TELESCOPIC LENSES SNAPPED ONTO MY ***IMPLANTS.***

WOOF!

THEY'RE PRETTY GIRLS ALL RIGHT, HERMAN.

PRETTY?!? ELIJAH, YOU ARE SO COLD BLOODED! THESE GIRLS WANT YOU --

GO ON, TOUCH THEIR BREASTS, TEST THE WATER WILLYA?

THEY WON'T MIND, RIGHT, GIRLS?

DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG THIS GUY'S TONGUE IS, GIRLS?

MAN, HE COULD KEEP BOTH OF YOU HAPPY ALL NIGHT WITHOUT UNZIPPING HIS PANTS...

YOU WANT ME TO TAKE MY TOP OFF, HERMAN...?

ON MY SHOW, HONEY, YOU DO NOT NEED TO ASK -- THIS IS DOGSTAR...

WOOF WOOF!

K-K-K K-K-K

HERMAN...

WHAT?
AIEEEEE!

AIEEEE--*

JEE-ZUS! THE CROC'S GONE TOTALLY REPTILE BRAIN ON US, OH MY CHRIST ALMIGHTY. SH!T

GET SECURITY IN HERE! NOW!

I AM SORRY, LISTENERS, YOU WILL NOT BELIEVE WHAT IS HAPPENING HERE... HOLY SHIT, I AM GONNA BARF!

STRUMM, YOU DON'T NEED SECURITY, YOU NEED A *DOCTOR*, THIS POOR GIRL SEEMS TO HAVE *PASSED OUT.*

I CAN'T IMAGINE *WHY!*

...

YOU FREAKING *TOERAG!*

YOU SCARED THE LIVING *SNOT* OUT OF ME!

I SWEAR, I HAVE *SERIOUSLY* CRAPPED MY PANTS!

THAT'S NOT THE SCENT I'M PICKING UP...

I SMELL *FEAR.*

YOU SMELL JUST LIKE ALL THE OTHER HUMANS I PASS IN THE STREET...

AS FOR *HUMAN FLESH,* HERMAN...

TASTES LIKE *CHICKEN.*

DEEPSANDMEN

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The ELEPHANT in the ROOM

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"IT IS CERTAIN THAT ASSOCIATED ANIMALS HAVE A FEELING OF LOVE FOR EACH OTHER, WHICH IS NOT FELT BY NON-SOCIAL ADULT ANIMALS. HOW FAR IN MOST CASES THEY ACTUALLY SYMPATHISE IN THE PAINS AND PLEASURES OF OTHERS, IS MORE DOUBTFUL. IT IS OFTEN DIFFICULT TO JUDGE WHETHER ANIMALS HAVE ANY FEELING FOR THE SUFFERINGS OF OTHERS OF THEIR KIND. WHO CAN SAY WHAT COWS FEEL, WHEN THEY SURROUND AND STARE INTENTLY ON A DYING OR DEAD COMPANION?

"DOGS POSSESS SOME POWER OF SELF-COMMAND, AND THIS DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE WHOLLY THE RESULT OF FEAR. THEY WILL REFRAIN FROM STEALING FOOD IN THE ABSENCE OF THEIR MASTER AND HAVE LONG BEEN ACCEPTED AS THE MODEL OF FIDELITY AND OBEDIENCE. BUT THE ELEPHANT IS LIKEWISE VERY FAITHFUL TO HIS DRIVER OR KEEPER, AND PROBABLY CONSIDERS HIM AS THE LEADER OF THE HERD. DR. HOOKER INFORMS ME THAT AN ELEPHANT, WHICH HE WAS RIDING IN INDIA, BECAME SO DEEPLY BOGGED THAT HE REMAINED STUCK FAST UNTIL THE NEXT DAY, WHEN HE WAS EXTRICATED BY MEN WITH ROPES. UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES ELEPHANTS WILL SEIZE WITH THEIR TRUNKS ANY OBJECT, DEAD OR ALIVE, TO PLACE UNDER THEIR KNEES, TO PREVENT THEIR SINKING DEEPER IN THE MUD; AND THE DRIVER WAS DREADFULLY AFRAID LEST THE ANIMAL SHOULD HAVE SEIZED DR. HOOKER AND CRUSHED HIM TO DEATH. BUT THE DRIVER HIMSELF, AS DR. HOOKER WAS ASSURED, RAN NO RISK. THIS FORBEARANCE UNDER AN EMERGENCY SO DREADFUL FOR A HEAVY ANIMAL, IS A WONDERFUL PROOF OF NOBLE FIDELITY."

CHARLES DARWIN
THE DESCENT OF MAN

ORIGINALLY PRESENTED IN ELEPHANTMEN #3

He'd be wrong. We spend every day of our lives trying to forget the things we've seen, the events we've experienced.

OH MY--

K-CHAK

The ELEPHANT in the ROOM!

By RICHARD STARKINGS & TOM SCIOLI with NICK FILARDI cover by BRIAN BOLLAND

HUH? WHO--?

It all started innocently enough at Koomeriah, my favorite water hole.

KOOMERIAH

It's good, they like me there. I can have a personal religious experience and eat healthy at the same time.

Which is obviously important for someone in my condition. I need to consume about fifty pounds of vegetables a day just to keep myself upright.

I THANK YOU, AND MY STOMACH THANKS YOU, MAHOUD.

THE HONOR IS *ENTIRELY* OURS, MISTER EBENEZER, SIR.

I'd had my eye on the kid across the shop the whole time. He clearly had something on his mind.

Sure enough...

HONORABLE SIR, I MUST SPEAK WITH YOU -- *URGENTLY.*

He had a story, of course, they all do. Everyone wants to speak to the Elephantmen. They all bring stories so they can take away the one about the day they spoke to a monster.

But this kid had something really interesting to say...

SERENGHETI? ***SERENGHETI*** IS INVOLVED IN THIS?

I'VE -- I'VE ALREADY SAID TOO MUCH...

HERE... I'VE ALREADY CALLED UP THE ADDRESS FOR YOU -- JUST, JUST BE *CAREFUL*... AND *DON'T* GO THERE ALONE.

"Don't go there alone."

It's not just good advice, it's Agency policy.

But I figured, I'm a big guy, I can take care of myself.

SPECIAL IMPORTS

I should have realized that when you're dealing with vermin like Serengheti...

...no one is safe.

HIDE. HOW NICE OF YOU TO COME...

MY CLIENT WOULD BE *EXTREMELY* DISAPPOINTED IF I FAILED TO DELIVER HIS REQUEST...

YOU SEE, HE DOESN'T WANT A SKELETON, OR A MOUNTED HEAD, WE HAVE PLENTY OF THOSE.

NO, HIS REQUEST IS VERY SPECIFIC...

HE WANTS THE WHOLE ANIMAL...

...STUFFED.

YOU... CREATURES ONLY HAVE YOURSELVES TO BLAME. YOUR *PLIGHT* PRICKED THE WORLD'S CONSCIENCE.

YOU GAVE A FACE TO ENDANGERED SPECIES AND SO ENDED THE BUSINESS OF EXOTIC ANIMAL PARTS.

MY BUSINESS.

OF COURSE, THERE ARE STILL COLLECTORS OUT THERE PREPARED TO RISK THE DEATH PENALTY.

AND I AM HAPPY TO DO WHAT I CAN TO ACCOMMODATE THEM.

Like all Elephantmen, I was... emasculated when I hit puberty.

NA-ROARRH

KRAK

But I am still a Bull Elephant.

Bull elephants cycle between a state of heightened aggressiveness, called musth, and non-musth. In musth, we secrete a foul-smelling sweat called Temporin.

SHEE-YIT! WHAT IS THAT SMELL?

BTAM

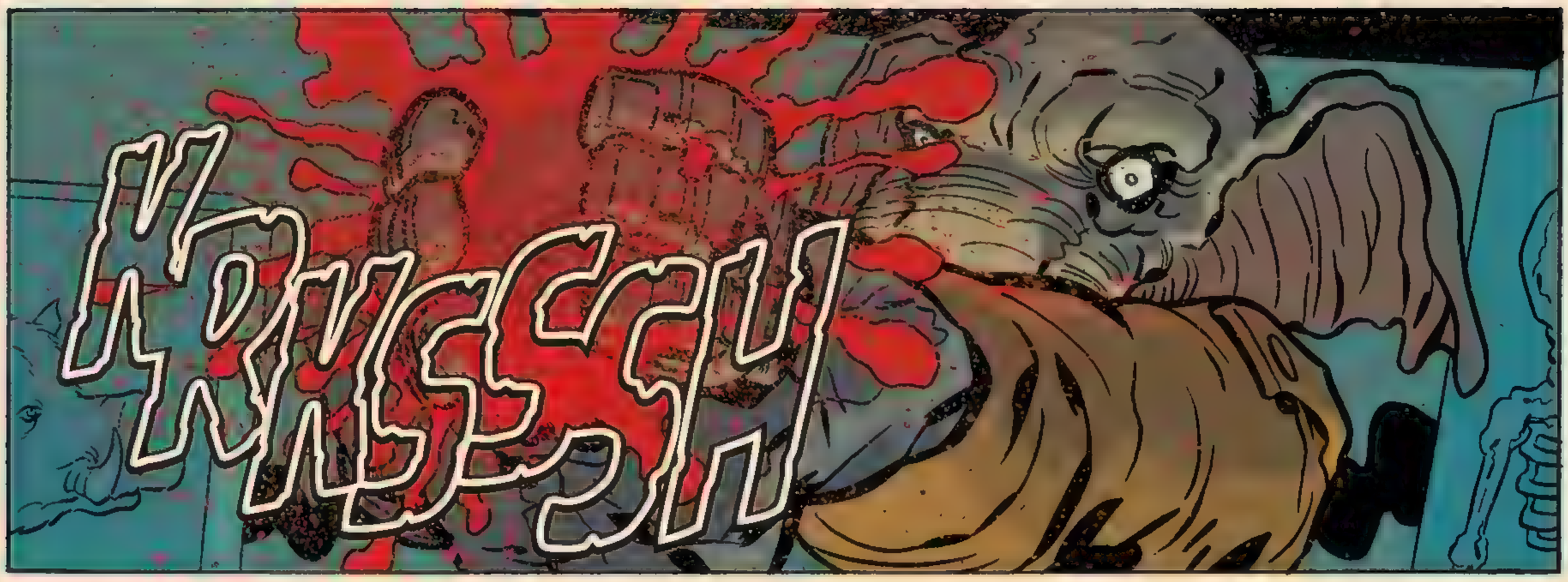
DON'T DAMAGE THE GOODS! BRING HIM DOWN!

≥UFF≤

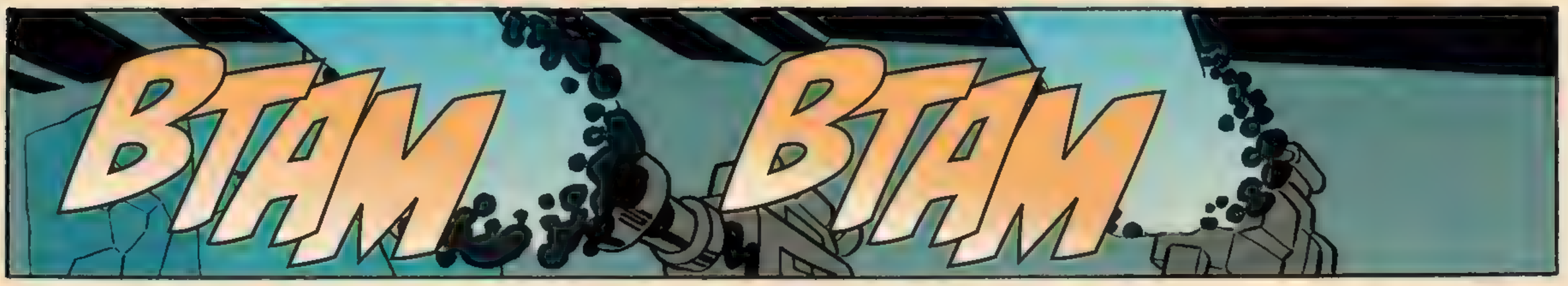
Thanks to the gene splicers at MAPPO, the Testosterone in my body has only one place to go.

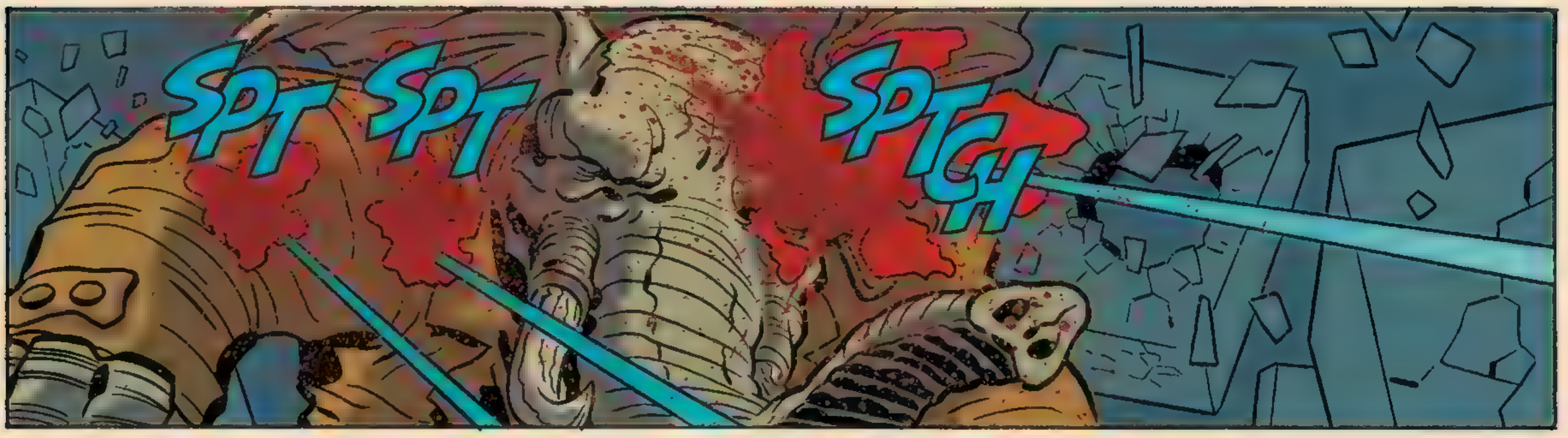
In other words, I see RED.

YAARRGHH!


KRASSH

SHUNK


BTAM
BTAM


SPT
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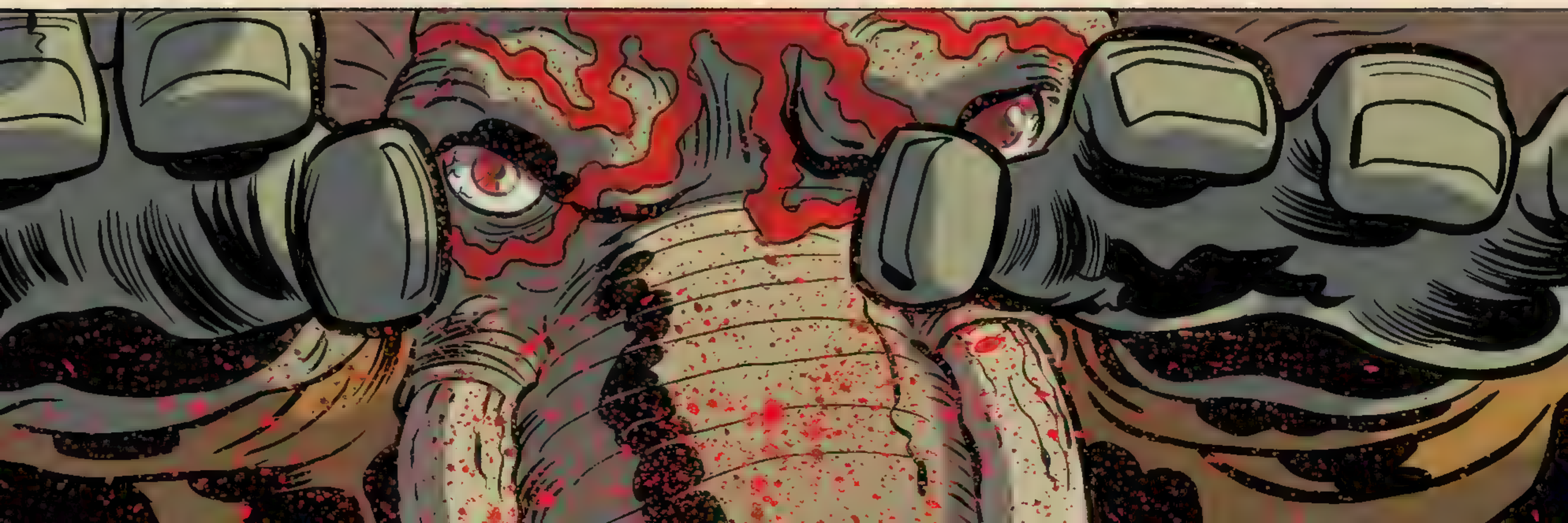

I don't know how long it was before I came back to my... senses.

Serengheti hadn't stuck around to see how well his men fared against me.

And when I came with backup early the next day, his... merchandise was gone too.

But not the smell.

Not the smell of musth, but the smell of death and rot. The smell of formaldehyde and dried blood.

A smell that you'd want to try hard to forget.

And as everyone knows...

Elephants never forget.

"FROM THE OYSTER TO THE EAGLE, FROM THE SWINE TO THE TIGER, ALL ANIMALS ARE TO BE FOUND IN MEN AND EACH OF THEM EXISTS IN SOME MAN, SOMETIMES SEVERAL AT THE SAME TIME. ANIMALS ARE NOTHING BUT THE PORTRAYAL OF OUR VIRTUES AND VICES MADE MANIFEST TO OUR EYES, THE VISIBLE REFLECTIONS OF OUR SOULS. GOD DISPLAYS THEM TO US TO GIVE US FOOD FOR THOUGHT."

VICTOR HUGO
LES MISERABLES, 1862

image

ELEPHANTMEN

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#003

Tales From Mystery City™ & The World of HIP FLASK

A GOOD LOOK

By

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A GOOD LOOK

By

STARKINGS & MORITAT cover by LADRÖNN

HELLO...?

「ひろるみきょ」

LOS ANGELES, 2259

HEY.

...ARE YOU ALL RIGHT...?

EWW... I GUESS NOT...

OKAY. FIRST AID...

FIRSTLY... RESPONSIVENESS.

ZERO.

YOU ARE OUT *COLD*, BABY.

KINDA CUTE, THOUGH, HUH?

HM

REMOVE SPECTACLES OR CONTACT LENSES...

I GUESS YOU'RE CLEAR ON THAT SCORE.

LOOSEN, -UFF- TIE OR ANY ARTICLE OF CLOTHING THAT MIGHT OBSTRUCT THE SUBJECT'S BREATHING.

LIKE HIS *CHIN*, MAYBE?

OKAY, CLEANUP TIME...

AND LOOK AT THAT...

I HAVE *ONE* RAG.

AND YOU, BABE...

YOU HAVE A *LOT* OF BLOOD.

MAN, YOU LOOK LIKE YOU HAVE BEEN THROUGH A WRINGER.

JEEZ...

NOW, THIS...

THIS...

THIS IS A BIG HAND...

=UFF=

THIS IS A *REALLY* BIG HAND...

BUT YOU'RE JUST A BIG BABY, REALLY AREN'T YOU?

LOOK AT YOU...

YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL.

BUT WHO...

WHO...

...IS *THIS* LITTLE GUY...?

WHOA, NELLIE!
YOU ARE NOT SO LITTLE AFTER ALL, ARE YOU?!
HH

UNNH...

YIKES!

SHUNT

AH

HUNNHH

UM... HI!

HOW ARE YOU DOING?

URRRH... VERY -- BADLY I SUSPECT...

IS THIS YOURS?

=AKK=
UH, YEAH...

PITY...

IT WOULD BE A GOOD LOOK FOR ME, DON'T YOU THINK?

HAH, YEAH... =UHHH=

I'M MIKI.

HIP.

DON'T WORRY, BIG GUY. THE MEDICS ARE ON THEIR WAY.

YOU'RE GONNA BE FINE.

ANIMALS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Any research or instructional use of hazardous materials in live animals requires the submission of an Animal Use Protocol to the appropriate Animal Care and Use Committee. The Protocol must be fully approved before any researcher may acquire, house, or use animals.

IMPORTANT: With the increasing prevalence of animal testing, there comes a greater need to protect researchers. Consider both the direct hazards associated with research animals and the hazardous metabolic byproducts produced by research animals.

ANIMALS AND RECOMBINANT GENETIC MATERIALS

Animal research with recombinant DNA (rDNA) must be conducted in accordance with NIH guidelines and TAMUS-HSC requirements. Containment and disposition is a critical concern, all experiments involving rDNA or genetically altered animals (including recombinants, transgenics, and mosaics) must receive prior approval from the appropriate TAMUS Institutional Biosafety Committee.

ANIMALS AND RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS

The component Radiation Safety Officer must approve the use of radioactive materials in animals. Authorization and permits to use radioisotopes must be acquired through the appropriate office or contact the Director of Administration. Always refer to your components Radiological Safety Manual for information.

SOURCE: TEXAS A&M HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER WEBSITE 2006

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ELEPHANTMEN

TUSK

By

STARKINGS · MORITAT · COMICRAFT · LADRÖNN

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LAZARUS PLANET

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ANIMALS

MAD!

URNNHH...

"I'M SEEING A LOT OF RAPID EYE MOVEMENT... HE'S UNDER, BUT HE'S NOT THAT FAR UNDER..."

WHUH?!

NO...

"HIS HEART'S TRIPPING LIKE A HAMMER..."

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

"HE DOESN'T LOOK COMFORTABLE TO ME..."

FCN428 NERVE AGENT TRIAL, DAY TWO...

WOUNDED ANIMALS

By STARKINGS & MORITAT covers by LADRÖNN & JOE MADUREIRA/DAVE STEWART

"ALTHOUGH ALL THE PACHYDERMS SHOW A MARKED RESISTANCE TO THE EFFECTS OF THE GAS...

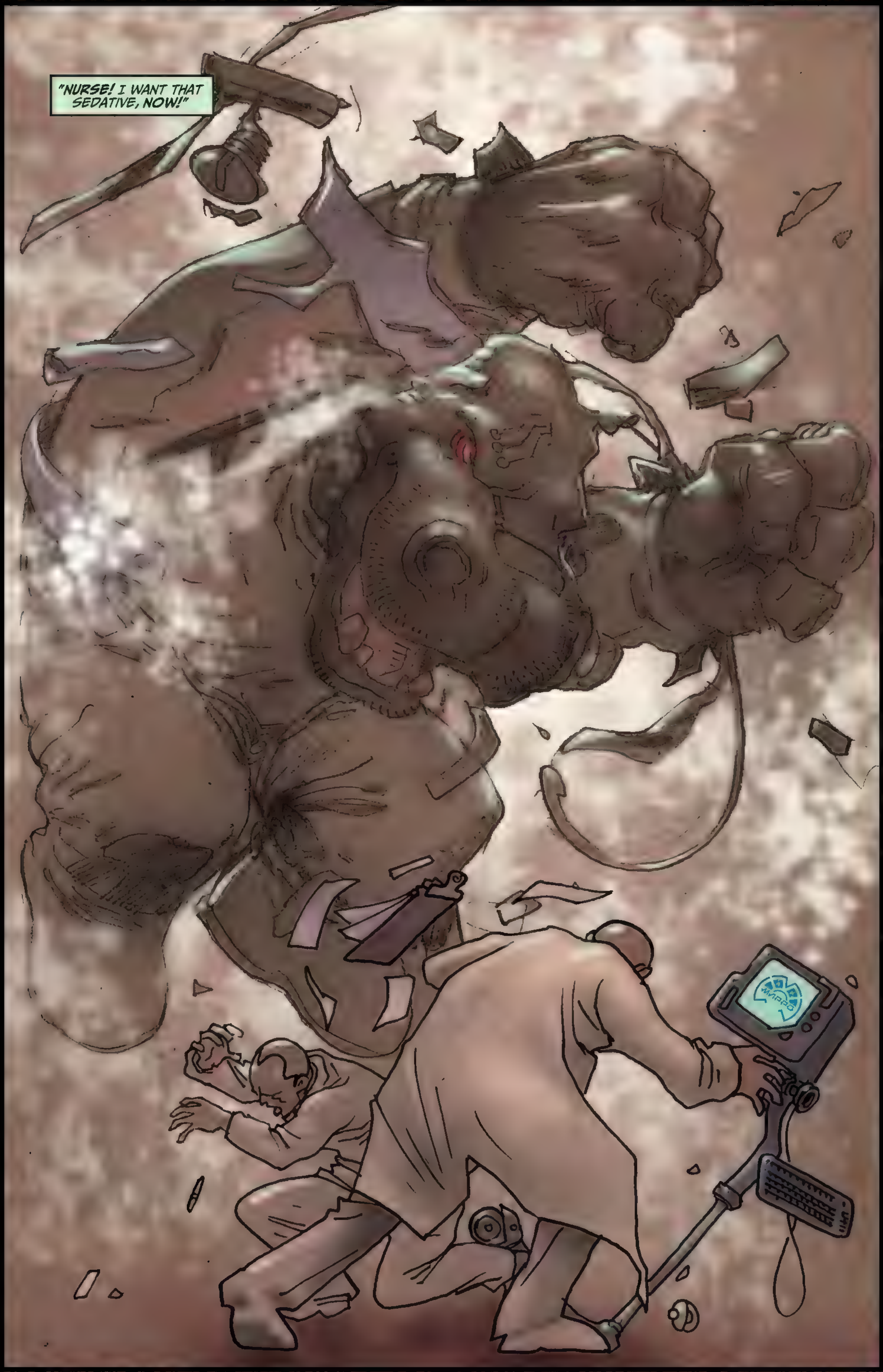
"...SUBJECT 9B IS EXHIBITING NUMEROUS CONTRAINDICATIONS, INCLUDING VOMITING AND A SWELLING OF THE ABDOMEN...

"BODILY FUNCTIONS OF SUBJECT 12E APPEAR TO BE COMPLETELY NORMAL, DESPITE A SLIGHT DROP IN THE SUBJECT'S PULSE RATE...

"....STRANGE, IN THE LAST FEW MINUTES, SUBJECT 7A HAS BEEN EXPERIENCING SEVERE BLEEDING FROM THE NOSTRILS..."

"NOW HIS PULSE RATE IS DROPPING -- HE'S GOING INTO SHOCK..."

"...IT'S POSSIBLE THAT 7A IS MANIFESTING THE SAME REACTIONS AS SUBJECT 4D...


"NURSE! I WANT THAT SEDATIVE, NOW!"

RRRRAARGGH

"STRAIGHT INTO HIS HEART, GODDAMMIT--!"

PSHHHST

OHMY GODOHMYGOD OHMYGOD!

HE'S OUT... HE'S OUT...

THAT WAS A CLOSE ONE.

SANTA MONICA · 2259

SAINT FRANCIS

LOOK, I *KNOW* HE WAS ADMITTED LAST NIGHT, BECAUSE I CALLED IT IN!

I ONLY NEED TO SEE HIM FOR A FEW MINUTES -- I HAVE SOMETHING THAT BELONGS TO HIM.

I'M SORRY, YOUNG LADY, NO-ONE IS PERMITTED TO SEE TRANSGENICS WHILE THEY'RE BEING TREATED AT THIS FACILITY.

SHE CAN COME WITH ME. I'M GOING IN TO SEE HIM NOW.

YOU CAN CLEAR IT WITH THE INFORMATION AGENCY.

WHO--?

GRUENWALD. AND YOU ARE --?

HIROMI KIYOKO -- *MIKI*. I FOUND THE HIPPO, THE, AH, HIPPO-POTAMOID -- TRANS-- *ELEPHANTMAN* ALONGSIDE THE CANALS--

YES, I READ THE REPORT...

WHAT IS IT ABOUT THESE GUYS THAT CATCHES A GIRL'S EYE, HMMM...?

I JUST WANTED TO RETURN THIS TO HIM...

HM. I THOUGHT WE WERE ONLY SUPPOSED TO BRING A BUNCH OF GRAPES.

NOT THAT A BUNCH OF GRAPES WOULD GO FAR WITH THESE TWO...

URH?

ENNH?

GOOD MORNING, BOYS!

NOW WHICH ONE OF YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL ME WHY I HAVE NOT ONE BUT *TWO* OF MY AGENTS INCAPACITATED?

AND WHY *BOTH* OF YOU WERE OPERATING OUTSIDE OF AGENCY GUIDELINES?

YOU GO FIRST.

SEE WHAT I HAVE TO DEAL WITH?

YOU THINK YOU'VE GOT PROBLEMS--? RIDEALONG WITH ME ON A FRIDAY NIGHT!

YOU'RE MIKI, RIGHT? THE CABBY?

HEY, I OWE YOU ONE, KID...

AH, IT WAS NUTHIN'...

I, UH... I KEPT *THIS* FOR YOU...

AH, UHH-- THANKS...

THERE IS, A, UM, STORY BEHIND THIS, Y'KNOW...

YEAH, WELL I'M NOT SURE I WANT TO HEAR IT!

EBONY, WHY DON'T YOU TAKE MIKI FOR A LITTLE WALK WHILE I, AH, *DEBRIEF* YOUR COLLEAGUE HERE?

ARE YOU GUYS IN *TROUBLE?*

NO MORE THAN USUAL.

DOES IT HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH YOUR INJURIES?

SUPER SECRET INFORMATION AGENCY BUSINESS?

YOU ASK A LOT OF QUESTIONS FOR A CAB DRIVER, DON'T YOU?

OH, I FLY A CAB JUST SO I CAN MEET PEOPLE.

AIRFARES AREN'T CHEAP, SO YOU GET TO TALK TO THE KIND OF FOLKS WHO HAVE A COUPLE OF DOLLARS TO THEIR NAME, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.

HEY, I NEVER KNEW YOU GUYS HAD YOUR OWN HOSPITAL!

YET SOMEHOW HERE YOU ARE...

HEH, I FOLLOWED THE HAZ-MAT WAGON OVER HERE LAST NIGHT.

WHAT CAN I TELL YOU, I HAVE AN *INSATIABLE* CURIOSITY!

WELL, DON'T FORGET WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CAT...

HEY-- WHAT'S IN HERE...?

HUH--?

OH, YEAH... LOOK, YOU REALLY DON'T WANT TO GO IN THERE...

WHY NOT? WHAT ELSE ARE YOU GUYS KEEPING FROM THE PUBLIC?

AFRAID I MIGHT *LEARN* SOMETHING?

OH, YOU WANT TO LEARN SOMETHING?

"WELL, WHY DON'T YOU COME AND MEET A FRIEND OF MINE...?

"MAKES ME AND HIP LOOK LIKE PRETTY BOYS, DON'T HE?"

"WE CALL HIM *TUSK*.

GOOD GOD...

WHAT *HAPPENED* TO HIM?

NO GOOD GOD HAD A HAND IN OUR CREATION, MIKI...

"WE WERE SIMPLY PRODUCTS, MANUFACTURED BY MAPPO.

"DESIGNED AND DELIVERED BY A MADMAN -- KAZUSHI NIKKEN.

"NIKKEN REGARDED HIMSELF AS OUR SOLE CREATOR, AND HE ALSO BELIEVED THAT THE LIVES HE HAD GIVEN US WERE HIS TO TAKE AWAY.

"AND WHAT DID WE KNOW...?

"WE KNEW OF NO OTHER LIFE... WE WERE GENETICALLY ENGINEERED BY MAPPO, TRAINED BY MAPPO AND BRAINWASHED BY MAPPO -- WE KNEW OF NOTHING OTHER THAN MAPPO.

"IF WE SUFFERED AT NIKKEN'S BIDDING, WE WERE TOLD THAT IT WAS FOR OUR OWN BENEFIT...

"OF COURSE, SOME OF US SUFFERED WORSE THAN OTHERS.

"NIKKEN DID NOT TOLERATE WEAKNESS. HIS CHILDREN HAD TO BE PERFECT.

"THE WEAKEST AMONG US WERE WEEDED OUT.

"AND DISPOSED OF...

"IRONICALLY, TUSK WAS THE STRONGEST OF THE WEAK LINKS.

"THEY PUSHED HIM PAST ALL THE LIMITS.

"HIS BODY WAS SUBJECTED TO EVERY POISON IN MAPPO'S ARSENAL.

"EVERY NERVE AGENT, EVERY CHEMICAL WEAPON KNOWN TO MAN WAS POURED INTO HIM.

"HIS SYSTEM WAS DESIGNED TO RESIST AND FLUSH THE TOXINS

"AND IT SUCCEEDED."

"BUT NOT BEFORE THE POISONS DESTROYED HIS MIND.

THEY KEPT HIM ALIVE TO REMIND US OF THE SUFFERINGS THEY SAID OUR ENEMIES INTENDED TO INFLICT UPON US.

THAT'S— THAT'S *INHUMAN!*

MIKI, NO ONE THINKS OF US AS HUMAN. WE WERE GUINEA PIGS THEN AND WE'RE STILL GUINEA PIGS TODAY.

THE U.N GOVERNMENTS KEEP TUSK ALIVE NOW AS A DEMONSTRATION OF THEIR COMPASSION AND HUMANITY.

THEY KEEP THE REST OF US ALIVE FOR PRETTY MUCH THE SAME REASON.

WEAPONS OF WAR, PRISONERS OF WAR, SPOILS OF WAR... IT'S ALL THE SAME THING.

"THE ELEPHANTMEN ARE NOVELTIES NOW... IN ANOTHER THIRTY OR FORTY YEARS WE'LL ALL BE DEAD, AND MAN WILL BREATHE A BIG SIGH OF RELIEF.

"YOU KNOW WHY GRUENWALD CAME OVER TODAY?

"BECAUSE THE GUYS HE WORKS FOR PAY HIM TO KEEP US IN LINE.

"THEY YANK HIS CHAIN AND SO HE YANKS OUR CHAINS.

"THEY SAY WE'RE FREE...

"BUT THEY KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON ALL OF US.

"THEY DON'T WANT US ARMED...

"THEY DON'T WANT US MEETING IN BIG GROUPS.

"THEY DON'T WANT US GETTING ANY FUNNY IDEAS.

"IF EVEN ONE OF US SHOULD RISE ABOVE THE PLACES IN SOCIETY THAT HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED TO US...

"WELL, WHO KNOWS WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN..."

角
ほぎん

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STARKINGS
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SELECTION

THE ORIGIN OF HIP FLASK®

"HOMO SAPIENS, THE FIRST TRULY FREE SPECIES, IS ABOUT TO DECOMMISSION NATURAL SELECTION, THE FORCE THAT MADE US.

"SOON, WE MUST LOOK DEEP WITHIN OURSELVES AND DECIDE WHAT WE WISH TO BECOME."

EDWARD O. WILSON
CONSILIENCE,
THE UNITY OF
KNOWLEDGE
1998

THIS IS A NEW BEGINNING.

DOCTOR NIKKEN--

SILENCE!

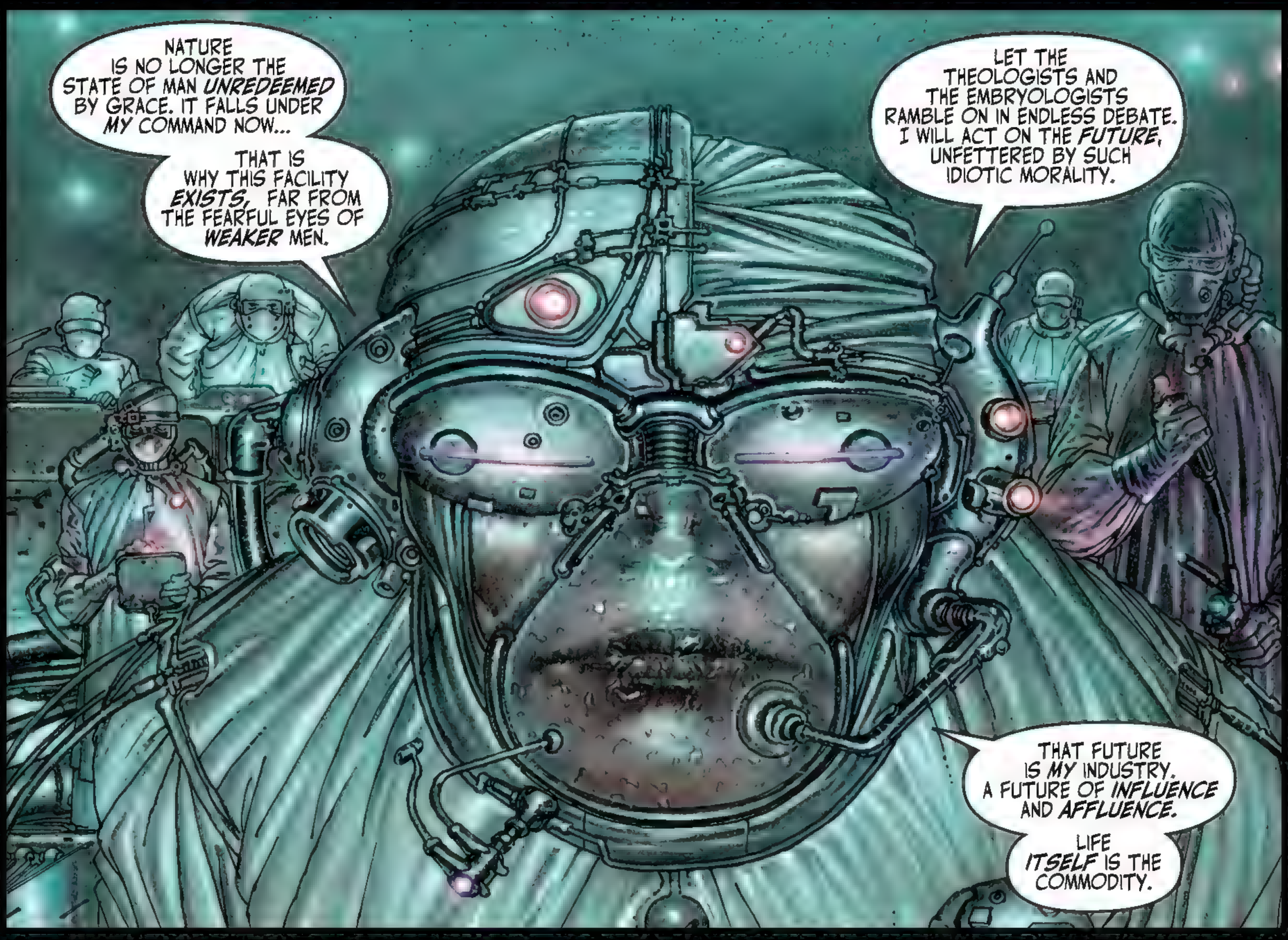
I AM THE VOICE THAT WILL BE HEARD THIS HOUR.

NORTH AFRICA · 2218

ONE MUST WONDER IF THIS IS HOW *GOD* FELT ON THE *SIXTH* DAY...

...OR IN THE INCALCULABLE MOMENT WHEN HE DECIDED TO GIVE THE EARTH A SON, NEEDING NOTHING BUT HIS OWN *OMNIPOTENCE* TO CREATE.

IMAGE COMICS PRESENTS:



THE ORIGIN OF THE ELEPHANTMEN

NOW, LET US LOOK TO THE FRUIT OF EARLIER LABOR...

WAIT...

INTERNAL SENSORS ARE READING AN *ANOMALY*...

FOCUS CORRELATING LENSES AND CENTER TWO-SIXTY-THREE.

UNNATURAL SELECTION

RICHARD STARKINGS
STORY & LETTERS

LADRONN
ART & STORY

JOE CASEY
WITH STARKINGS
DIALOGUE

SO... THE MECHANICAL AND CHEMICAL AGENTS DO INDEED STIMULATE THE UNFERTILIZED EGG. THE PARTHENOTE ACHIEVES *INDEPENDENCE,* BUT PERHAPS THE DESIGN FEATURES OF THE ARTIFICIAL WOMB ARE PROMOTING AN UNCONTROLLABLE MUTATION IN DEVELOPMENT AT A CRITICAL JUNCTION.

SCIENCE IS EVER THE VIOLENT PROCESS OF DISCOVERY. AND THERE IS MONEY TO BE MADE HERE... THERE IS *POWER.* I WILL NOT BE DISSUADED.

COMMENCE EMBRYONIC TERMINATION IMMEDIATELY. PREPARE A NEW OVUM SCREENING AND LET US MOVE ON TO *PHASE TWO.*

WHEN GOD CREATED *ADAM...*

"...HE TOO NEEDED AN EVE..."

NORTH AFRICA · 2024

THIS IS THE VOICE OF *NIKKEN*...

THEY SAY NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION. THIS HAS NEVER BEEN MORE APPROPRIATE WHEN CONSIDERING THE *SCIENCE* INVOLVED HERE.

THE *FEMALES* INDIGENOUS TO THIS REGION HAVE PROVEN TO BE EXCELLENT ENGINES OF *REPRODUCTION*...

... THE FACT THAT NO ONE HAS MISSED THEM IS MERELY AN ADDED BONUS.

RETRIEVING SUBJECT SEVEN-A...

NOTIFY DOCTOR NIKKEN THAT THE *EXTRACTION TEAM* AWAITS HIM IN SURGICAL BAY FOUR...

...YES...

WELCOME TO MY WORLD, FEEBLE CREATURE.

BREATHE DEEP. WITH EACH GASP OF OXYGEN, YOU WILL GROW *STRONGER.*

THIS IS AN HISTORIC MOMENT, GENTLEMEN. THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA...

... THESE ANIMALS ARE COMPLETELY *UNIQUE.*

PERHAPS THE TERM 'ANIMAL' NO LONGER EVEN APPLIES.

BRAND IT.

MAPPO SHALL NAME THEM.

MAPPO WILL *OWN* THEM.

HIP FLASK

DISPOSE OF THE CARRIER. THE WOMAN IS COMPLETELY UNNECESSARY NOW.

I WILL BE FATHER AND MOTHER TO THESE BEASTS.

I WILL BE THEIR GOD.

BRING ME ANOTHER.

THIS IS THE VOICE OF NIKKEN...

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND MYSELF... I WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE ALL MAPPO EMPLOYEES ON A SUCCESSFUL BIRTH.

PLEASE CONSULT YOUR SHARE PACKAGES FOR FUTURE INTERNAL INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

OUR CURRENT PRODUCTION RATE WILL INCREASE OVER THE MONTHS AHEAD. THIS INITIAL BATCH WILL SOON BEGIN VIRTUAL INDOCTRINATION THERAPY THAT WILL RUN UNTIL SOCIALIZATION CELLS ARE ESTABLISHED...

...THE TEACHERS WILL ARRIVE AT THE END OF THE WEEK.

... THINKING FOR HIMSELF IS THE NATURE OF *MAN.* DO NOT MISTAKE HIS SUPERIORITY FOR SOME SORT OF *OPPORTUNITY.* IT IS BEYOND YOUR CAPACITY TO HAVE AN *ORIGINAL* BEHAVIORAL IMPULSE.

AS FAR AS YOU MONKEYS ARE CONCERNED, THERE IS *NOTHING* OUTSIDE OF THESE WALLS. THERE IS NO WORLD BUT *MAPPO.* THERE IS NO INDIVIDUALITY BEYOND *MAPPO.* THERE ARE NO IDEAS... SAVE FOR *MAPPO.*

THERE IS NO...

... IS YOUR HAND *RAISED,* SEVEN? YOU THINK YOU HAVE... A QUESTION..?

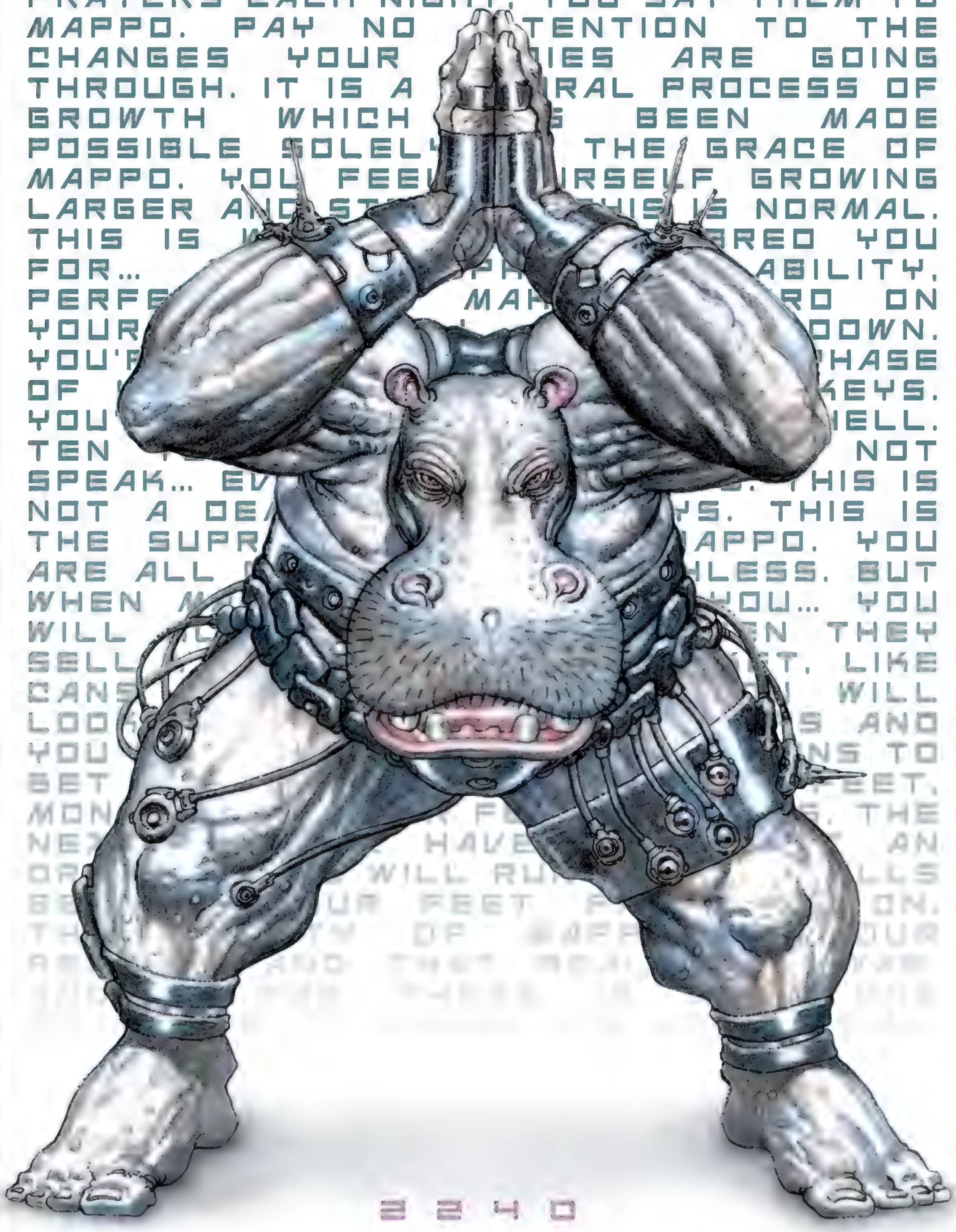
...UH...

THERE IS NO SENSE OF SELF OUTSIDE OF *MAPPO.* NO INDEPENDENT THOUGHT... ONLY THOUGHTS OF *MAPPO.* YOU WILL HEAR NO OTHER VOICE EXCEPT THE VOICE OF *MAPPO.*

YOUR LIVES ARE NOT YOUR OWN, MONKEYS. YOU HAVE BEEN BORN INTO *SERVITUDE...* AND YOUR MASTER IS *MAPPO.*

FREE WILL WAS TAKEN FROM YOU EVEN BEFORE YOU WERE *CONCEIVED,* THE CONCEPT OF FREE WILL IS *BEYOND* YOU. SO IT IS... AND SO IT SHALL ALWAYS BE...

... OBEDIENCE IS YOUR PRIME OBJECTIVE. WHAT IS OBEDIENCE? IT IS GIVING YOURSELF OVER TO MAPPO FOR COMPLETE AND UTTER SERVITUDE, WITHOUT QUESTION OR CONFLICT. REMEMBER, MONKEYS, YOU HAVE NO LIVES SAVE FOR THE ONES GIVEN TO YOU BY MAPPO. WHEN YOU SAY YOUR PRAYERS EACH NIGHT, YOU SAY THEM TO MAPPO. PAY NO [illegible]TENTION TO THE CHANGES YOUR [illegible]IES ARE GOING THROUGH. IT IS A [illegible]RAL PROCESS OF GROWTH WHICH [illegible]S BEEN MADE POSSIBLE SOLEL[illegible] THE GRACE OF MAPPO. YOU FEEL [illegible]RSELF GROWING LARGER AND ST[illegible]HIS IS NORMAL. THIS IS [illegible]RED YOU FOR... [illegible]ABILITY. PERFE[illegible]RD ON YOUR [illegible]DOWN. YOU'[illegible]HASE OF [illegible]KEYS. YOU[illegible]ELL. TEN[illegible] NOT SPEAK... EV[illegible]S. THIS IS NOT A DEA[illegible]YS. THIS IS THE SUPR[illegible]APPO. YOU ARE ALL [illegible]HLESS. BUT WHEN M[illegible]OU... YOU WILL [illegible]EN THEY SELL[illegible]T. LIKE CANS[illegible] WILL LOO[illegible]S AND YOU[illegible]NS TO SET[illegible]EET. MON[illegible]. THE NEX[illegible] HAVE[illegible] AN OR[illegible] WILL RU[illegible]LLS BE[illegible]UR FEET F[illegible]ON. TH[illegible]Y OF [illegible]OUR



"YOU MONKEYS ARE *PATHETIC.* YOU DON'T HAVE THE *LOOK* IN YOUR EYES THAT TELLS ME THAT YOU'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO *KILL.*"

"THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE. PREPARE TO CROSS OVER INTO A WORLD OF *HURT.*"

"*MAPPO* DIDN'T WASTE ITS RESOURCES FOR YOU MONKEYS TO BE *SOFT!* YOU WILL BE WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION EVEN IF I HAVE TO BEAT YOU LIKE *DOGS!*"

"JUST BECAUSE YOU MONKEYS *LOOK* SLOW DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE TO *MOVE* SLOW!"

LET'S GO, MONKEY. YOU'RE GENETICALLY *ENGINEERED* TO LIFT TWICE THAT!

COME ON!!

"MAPPO DOES NOT ACCEPT SECOND-BEST! I HAVEN'T SPENT THE LAST *TEN YEARS* TRAINING YOU SO YOU *WOULDN'T* POSSESS THE *KILLER INSTINCT!* THAT'D BE A WASTE OF MY TIME, WOULDN'T IT?!"

THAT'S IT, MONKEYS! FIGHT AS THOUGH YOUR LIVES *DEPENDED* ON IT! EVEN IF YOU HAVE TO *KILL* EACH OTHER! AFTER ALL...

"...ONE DAY YOU MAY *HAVE* TO."

UN
ALERT!
ALERT! ALERT!
PERIMETER BREACH! ALL UNITS... PREPARE TO REPEL INTRUDERS!

THIS IS NOT A DRILL! THIS IS NOT A DRILL! THIS IS--

THIS IS THE VOICE OF NIKKEN.

REMEMBER... MAN IS YOUR ENEMY! THE LAW OF THE JUNGLE IS KILL OR BE KILLED! MAN INVADES YOUR TERRITORY ONLY TO DESTROY YOU!

YOU ARE NOT GOD'S CHILDREN! GOD MADE YOU WEAKER THAN MAN! MAPPO MADE YOU STRONG! YOU WILL DEFEND MAPPO TO YOUR LAST BREATH!

YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH HERE! WE NEED MORE MEN NOW!!

MAPPO HAS GIVEN YOU EVERYTHING! WITHOUT MAPPO... YOU HAVE NOTHING! WITHOUT MAPPO...

...YOU ARE NOTHING.

YOU WILL FIGHT UNTIL YOUR DYING BREATH! THIS IS WHAT YOU ARE BRED FOR! THIS IS THE REASON FOR YOUR EXISTENCE!

STAND TALL AND FIGHT FOR YOUR MASTERS!

YOU ARE LOWER THAN THE BEASTS OF THE FIELD. YOU ARE NOT MAN. YOU ARE NOT ANIMAL.

WHAT IS THAT... *ANOTHER* ONE?

LOOKS LIKE A *HUMAN FEMALE*...

THAT BRINGS THE COUNT TO *OVER* TWO HUNDRED...

YOU ARE MERELY PROPERTY.

"...WHAT IN GOD'S NAME WERE THEY *DOING HERE*...?!"

MAPPO HAS ENGINEERED YOU! WITHOUT MAPPO... YOU DO NOT EXIST!

REMEMBER... MAN IS YOUR ENEMY! THE LAW OF THE JUNGLE IS KILL OR BE KILLED...

MY GOD... SOMEONE SHUT THAT DOWN!

MAPPO HAS GIVEN YOU EVERYTHING! WITHOUT MAPPO... YOU HAVE NOTHING! WITHOUT MAPPO --

YOU ARE SAFE NOW.

YOU ARE ANIMAL... AND YOU ARE LESS THAN ANIMAL. ALWAYS REMEMBER YOUR PLACE IN THIS WORLD... YOU ARE NOTHING MORE THAN PROPERTY OF MAPPO!

OKAY, "DOC," MOVE IT...

YOU ARE NOT GOD'S CHILDREN! GOD MADE YOU WEAKER THAN MAN! MAPPO MADE YOU STRONG! YOU WILL DEFEND MAPPO TO YOUR LAST BREATH!

JEEZUS-- IS SOMEONE GOING TO KILL THAT LOUDSPEAKER?!

YOU CAN TURN IT OFF...

BUT THEY WILL ALWAYS HEAR THE VOICE OF NIKKEN INSIDE THEIR HEADS.

ALL THAT YOU ARE... AND ALL THAT YOU WILL EVER BE... IS BECAUSE OF MAPPO!

YOU ARE NOTHING WITHOUT MAPPO.

PLAN TO CREATE HUMAN-COW EMBRYOS

Fergus Walsh
BBC News Medical correspondent

UK scientists have applied for permission to create embryos by fusing human DNA with cow eggs. The hybrid human-bovine embryos would be used for stem cell research and would not be allowed to develop for more than a few days.

Liberal Democrat MP Dr. Evan Harris of the Commons Science and Technology Select Committee said: "If human benefit can be derived by perfecting therapeutic cloning techniques or from research into subsequently-derived stem cells, then it would actually be immoral to prevent it just because of a 'yuck' factor."

The problem is that human eggs for research are in short supply and to obtain them women have to undergo surgery. That is why scientists want to use cows' eggs as a substitute. They would insert human DNA into a cow's egg which has had its genetic material removed, and then create an embryo by the same technique that produced Dolly the Sheep. The resulting embryo would be 99.9% human; the only bovine element would be DNA outside the nucleus of the cell. It would, though, technically be a chimera -- a mixing of two distinct species into one. The aim would be to extract stem cells from the embryo when it is six days old, before destroying it.

But some argue that the research undermines the distinction between animals and humans. Calum MacKellar, of the Scottish Council on Human Bioethics, said: "In the history of humankind, animals and human species have been separated. In this kind of procedure, you are mixing at a very intimate level animal eggs and human chromosomes, and you may begin to undermine the whole distinction between humans and animals.

"If that happens, it might also undermine human dignity and human rights."

news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/6121280.stm

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WHEN ANIMALS ATTACK!

HORN INDUSTRIES TOWER

LOS ANGELES · 2259

THE UNITED NATIONS HAD PUT THE ELEPHANTMEN ON A TRAIN.

FFAP FLPP FLP

FLPP FLP

THEY WERE PROMISED FREEDOM.

FREEDOM FROM MAPPO.

AND THEN THEY WERE HERDED AWAY.

FTAP FLP

NORTH AFRICA · 2248

EXODUS!

"When a man strikes his slave with a rod so hard that the slave dies under his hand, he shall be punished. If, however, the slave survives for a day or two, he is not to be punished, since the slave is his own property. EXODUS 21:20-21

TRAPPED

SHOT

DRUGGED

LIKE ANIMALS.

... AND LESS THAN ANIMAL. ALWAYS REMEMBER YOUR PLACE IN THE WORLD... YOU ARE NOTHING MORE THAN PROPERTY OF MAPPO...

SUCH WAS THEIR FATE.

SALVATION.

THERE WAS NO HOPE OF ESCAPE.

... YOU ARE NOT GOD'S CHILDREN! GOD MADE YOU WEAKER THAN MAN! MAPPO MADE YOU STRONG..

KZZZKT

THAT IS ENOUGH!

BRATATATATATAT

FOR SOME, THERE SEEMED TO BE NO HOPE AT ALL.

SOUTH SIDE IS SECURE, CONTROL, CONTINUING THE SWEEP...

NO, I DON'T THINK SO, MONKEY!

KRTAW

YOU DARE--?

KR-INCH

NYAARGH!

FOR EIGHTEEN YEARS THEY HAD BEEN RAISED AS AN ARMY.

AND FED LIKE AN ARMY.

MEAT.

THEY HAD PUT THE ELEPHANTMEN ON A TRAIN.

IN THE CATTLE TRUCKS.

THE SMELL OF FEAR AND DEATH, URINE AND FECES STILL FILLED THE DAMP STALE AIR.

WHERE ARE THEY TAKING US?

MAPPO HAD MADE THEM STRONG.

MAPPO HAD GIVEN THEM EVERYTHING.

WHAT WOULD THEY BE WITHOUT MAPPO?

WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO DO TO US?

KILL US.

THAT'S IT, ISN'T IT?

THEY'RE GOING TO KILL US. GAS US--

AGK

THAT'S ENOUGH...

THIS IS NOT THE BEHAVIOR OF A SOLDIER.

YOU HAVE *FORGOTTEN* WHO YOU ARE.

LEAVE HIM ALONE.

I HAVE NO FIGHT WITH YOU, SEVEN.

BUT IF YOU ARE *LOOKING* FOR ONE...

YEEARGGGH!

HURRKK--

I AM *NOT* A MONKEY.

URRH!

CRAKK

THEN -- WHAT ARE YOU, HMMNH?

JUST A KILLING MACHINE! JUST ANOTHER ONE OF MAPPO'S TOYS!

YOU ARE NOTHING!

NO...

I AM A SURVIVOR.

LET'S SEE IF THE SAME CAN BE SAID OF YOU.

POW

SO THAT'S THE WAY IT IS.

FINE.

THWAK

UMPH!

MAPPO HAD MADE THEM STRONG.

MAPPO HAD GIVEN THEM EVERYTHING.

MAPPO HAD TAUGHT THEM TO KILL OR BE KILLED.

ARH...

ANOTHER ONE...?

YOU HERE FOR *YOUR* POUND OF FLESH?

NO.

I KNOW OF A WAY WE CAN GET OUT OF HERE.

HEY!

BRATATATATATAT

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO, *KILL* EACH OTHER?

FER CRYIN' OUT LOUD, WE JUST *RESCUED* YOUR UNGRATEFUL HIDES!

THIS ISN'T OVER, REGARDLESS OF WHAT THESE HUMANS SAY...

INSIDE OR OUTSIDE OF MAPPO, THIS IS STILL A MATTER OF THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST.

I'LL SURVIVE, OBADIAH.

ONLY NOT BY PREYING ON THE WEAK.

THEN YOU WILL SUFFER ALONGSIDE THEM. AND YOU WILL SHARE THEIR FATE.

PERHAPS.

NIKKEN MUST BE PROUD OF YOU.

THESE MAINTENANCE TUNNELS RUN ALL THE WAY TO THE OUTSKIRTS OF KWELA, A TOWN CONTROLLED BY MAPPO SO THAT THEY COULD REDIRECT POWER FOR THE INSTALLATION.

I WORKED AS PART OF A TEAM DOWN HERE WHEN THERE WAS A BREACH DURING A STORM.

THERE'S A SMALL HOSPITAL THERE, THEY'LL TREAT YOU.

AND WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'LL GET FROM ME IN RETURN?

I DON'T KNOW YET...

WHY DON'T WE JUST FIGURE OUT HOW TO GET AWAY FROM HERE FIRST?

WE CAN WORK OUT AN UNDERSTANDING LATER.

LOS ANGELES · 2259

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST.

OBADIAH HORN HAD LEARNED THAT LESSON WELL.

FLPP

HE HAD SURVIVED, AND THRIVED.

FTAP FLPP

HE TOOK EVERYTHING MAN OFFERED AND MADE IT HIS OWN.

FLP

HE SURROUNDED HIMSELF WITH THE STRONG AND THE POWERFUL.

WEAKER CREATURES HE DISCARDED.

WHAT PURPOSE COULD THEY SERVE?

WELL, WELL, WELL...

NICE LITTLE RESTAURANT YOU HAVE YOURSELF HERE.

"THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE."

I GET IT.

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

I THOUGHT WE WERE DONE.

MAYBE YOU WERE DONE WITH ME, BUT I AM NOT DONE WITH YOU.

IT'S BEEN A WHILE, JOE, BUT I NEED A PLACE TO STAY.

LISTEN, DO YOU HAVE A HANDKERCHIEF -- I SEEM TO HAVE BLOOD ON MY BOOT.

HERE.

THANK YOU.

NOW, BE A GOOD MONKEY AND CLEAN IT UP.

THEY HAD PUT THE ELEPHANTMEN ON A TRAIN.

THEY WERE PROMISED FREEDOM.

SUCH WAS THEIR FATE.

SALVATION.

By Richard Starkings and Moritat

ELEPHANTMEN™

image

ABANDONED BY GOD

JAN 2007

HASTINGS · MORITAT · LADRÖNN

SANTA MONICA · 2259

WELL, LIFE IS FULL OF SURPRISES, AND MAYBE NO ONE WAS SURPRISED BY THE ANNOUNCEMENT YESTERDAY OF THE ENGAGEMENT OF **OBADIAH HORN**, THE MOST CELEBRATED AND SUCCESSFUL OF ALL THE ELEPHANTMEN, AND HIS CONSORT, **SAHARA**...

NEVERTHELESS, SEVERAL HUNDRED PEOPLE GATHERED AT THE LOS ANGELES COURTHOUSE THIS MORNING TO PROTEST.

LIFE

THE HIGH PROFILE COUPLE'S ENGAGEMENT COMES JUST MONTHS AFTER CALIFORNIA BECAME THE FIRST STATE IN THE UNION TO RECOGNIZE **INTER-SPECIES MARRIAGE.**

LIFE

PROTEST ORGANIZER AND PRESIDENT OF THE **CHILDREN OF GOD** COALITION, **PERRY FALBERTSON**, HAD THIS TO SAY...

THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE IS UNDER ATTACK, AND THE LORD HIMSELF HAS CALLED UPON US TO PROTECT IT! "WHOSOEVER LIETH WITH A **BEAST** SHALL SURELY BE PUT TO **DEATH!**"

ABANDONED BY GOD

Another Great & Tall Tale from Mystery City by Starkings & Moritat

I DON'T CARE WHAT THAT NASTY MAN SAYS, BUTTERCUP, I THINK SAHARA IS A *PRINCESS!*

TUNE IN TO THE BREAKFAST SHOW TOMORROW MORNING FOR OUR EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH OBADIAH HORN AND HIS WIFE-TO-BE, SAHARA.

SAVANNAH, THAT ANIMAL LOVER IS *NOT* A PRINCESS, SHE IS A *TRAMP*, AND DON'T YOU FORGET IT!

SHE IS A PRINCESS!

DON'T YOU *DARE* TAKE THAT TONE WITH ME, YOUNG LADY.

THOSE ELEPHANTMEN ARE NOTHING MORE THAN BEASTS OF THE FIELD, AND IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU STOPPED FILLING YOUR HEAD WITH *FAIRY TALES* ABOUT THEM.

YOU'RE JUST *JEALOUS* BECAUSE YOU DON'T *HAVE* A HUSBAND!

SMACK

THAT'S IT! I'VE HAD **ENOUGH** OF YOUR CHEEK!

OWIE--

GO TO YOUR ROOM RIGHT NOW!

GO TO YOUR ROOM!

I **HATE** YOU! I WISH SAHARA WAS MY MOM!

SLAM

AND HORN ISN'T THE ONLY ELEPHANTMAN IN THE NEWS TODAY...

...THERE'S STILL NO WORD ON THE CONDITION OF INFORMATION AGENT **EBONY HIDE**, WHO WAS ADMITTED TO SAINT FRANCIS'S MEDICAL CENTER YESTERDAY WITH MULTIPLE BULLET WOUNDS.

HUNH?!

EBONY?

NEWS HAS REACHED US THAT HIDE'S COLLEAGUE, AGENT FLASK, WHO WAS INJURED IN A SEPARATE INCIDENT, HAS BEEN DISCHARGED FROM THE CENTER...

C'MON, BUTTERCUP, WE'RE GOING ON A FIELD TRIP...

IT'S NOT AS IF WE'RE GOING TO GET SUPPER HERE TONIGHT ANYWAY...

AND SAINT FRANCIS'S IS JUST DOWN THE STREET FROM SCHOOL.

WE'LL TAKE EBONY SOME FLOWERS, HE'LL LIKE THAT...

OBADIAH--?

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

MY LOVE, IS THAT *BLOOD* ON THE HAND TOWEL?

IT'S REALLY NOTHING, MY DEAR.

YOU SEE? A BIRD PECKED ME AS I STOOD OUT ON THE BALCONY. IT'S NOT EVEN A SCRATCH.

YOU SHOULDN'T BE AFRAID OF A LITTLE BLOOD ON MY HANDS.

IF I DIDN'T WORRY ABOUT YOU, THEN WHO WOULD, HM?

OBADIAH, WE COULD *CANCEL* THIS INTERVIEW IF YOU SO DESIRE.

THERE MAY BE SOME QUESTIONS... *AWKWARD* QUESTIONS...

MY DEAR, DO YOU THINK I AM NOT USED TO AWKWARD QUESTIONS?

YOU, MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE, KNOW THAT I HAVE BEEN ANSWERING THEM ALL MY LIFE.

IF *YOU* WISH, I WILL HANDLE THESE PEOPLE, AND WE CAN OFFER A SIMPLE EXCUSE FOR YOUR ABSENCE.

OF COURSE NOT, OBADIAH. THEY WOULD ONLY SEE THAT AS SOME KIND OF RELUCTANCE ON MY PART.

AND I WILL *ALWAYS* BE BY YOUR SIDE WHEN YOU NEED ME, MY LOVE.

MISTER BAUER, MISS CUSSICK, MY NAME IS *PURCHASE.*

PLEASE MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME....

MISTER HORN AND HIS FIANCÉE WILL BE WITH YOU VERY SHORTLY.

I'M GETTING INTERFERENCE LIKE I CAN'T BELIEVE, HAVE YOU GUYS GOT SOME KIND OF ELECTROMAGNET NEARBY?

LIVE TRANSMISSIONS ARE NOT POSSIBLE FROM THIS FACILITY. IT'S A SECURITY MEASURE.

PAPARAZZI. YOU KNOW HOW IT IS.

MATT, KATIE, GOOD EVENING.

WELCOME TO OUR HOME.

SAHARA, SO GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

A REAL PLEASURE, SIR.

WELL, LET'S GET RIGHT INTO IT, OBADIAH, YOU AND SAHARA CREATED A FIRESTORM OF CONTROVERSY EARLIER TODAY WHEN YOU ANNOUNCED YOUR ENGAGEMENT TO ONE ANOTHER.

HOW ARE YOU HANDLING THIS? I MEAN YOU'RE IN EVERY MAGAZINE, EVERY NEWSPAPER, EVERY ENTERTAINMENT SHOW. WHAT'S IT LIKE FOR YOU TO BE LIVING THROUGH THIS RIGHT NOW?

I HAVE TO TELL YOU. MATT, THIS IS A GREAT TIME IN OUR LIVES. WE'RE REALLY HAPPY. WE'RE ENGAGED. WE'RE GOING TO BE MARRIED.

I'M SURE MOST OF YOUR VIEWERS UNDERSTAND HOW THAT FEELS.

SAHARA, YOU'RE NO STRANGER TO CONTROVERSY, ARE YOU?

YOUR FATHER DISOWNED YOU, YOUR MOTHER DISAPPEARED FROM YOUR HOME IN THE SUDAN, UNDER *VERY* SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES --

YOUR LIFE HAD SUCH HUMBLE AND ALSO *TRAGIC* BEGINNINGS, HOW DO YOU COPE WITH THE OPULENCE AND CELEBRITY OF THE LIFE YOU LIVE NOW?

KATIE, IT'S NO SECRET THAT MY MOTHER WAS ABDUCTED BY MAPPO AND USED BY THEM TO CARRY A CHILD OF THEIR MAKING --

AN *ELEPHANTMAN.*

SO HAS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OBADIAH BEEN FUELED BY A DESIRE TO *CONNECT* SOMEHOW WITH YOUR MOTHER'S EXPERIENCES?

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH OBADIAH IS BASED SOLELY ON *LOVE*, MATT.

BUT THIS *IS* THE QUESTION ON PEOPLE'S MINDS, SAHARA... YOU AND OBADIAH COULD WELL BE BROTHER AND SISTER.

NO, MATT, DNA TESTS HAVE CONCLUSIVELY DETERMINED THAT SAHARA AND I ARE *NOT* KITH AND KIN.

THAT'S NOT THE QUESTION ON PEOPLE'S MINDS, IS IT?

WELL, DO YOU AND SAHARA PLAN TO HAVE CHILDREN?

IS IT *POSSIBLE* FOR YOU TO HAVE CHILDREN?

NO, IT'S NOT.

IT'S POSSIBLE FOR US TO HAVE CHILDREN, IT'S JUST NOT ALLOWED... YOU KNOW THAT, KATIE.

BUT LAWS CHANGE...

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE A CHILD WITH YOUR FIANCÉ, SAHARA?

KATIE, WHAT COUPLE WOULDN'T WANT TO CONSUMMATE THEIR LOVE WITH A CHILD?

YOU'RE NAMED AFTER THE BIGGEST ***DESERT*** IN THE WORLD, SAHARA, A DESERT THAT THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE THERE REFER TO AS *"ABANDONED BY GOD..."*

GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF YOUR OWN LIFE, DO YOU EVER FEEL AS IF ***YOU*** HAVE BEEN ABANDONED BY GOD...?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

GOD *IS* LOVE, IS HE NOT? AND MY LIFE IS *FULL* OF LOVE.

BUT DO YOU THINK YOUR MOTHER WOULD *APPROVE* OF SUCH A MARRIAGE, SAHARA?

IS THAT YOUR ANGLE?

ARE YOU TRYING TO SUGGEST THAT SAHARA'S OWN MOTHER WOULD DISOWN HER?

WELL, THINK ABOUT THIS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE AVERAGE WOMAN IN THE STREET.

IMAGINE HOW SHE WOULD FEEL IF HER DAUGHTER BROUGHT A CREATURE LIKE YOU HOME TO DINNER WITH HER AND THEY ANNOUNCED THEIR ENGAGEMENT TO ONE ANOTHER.

A CREATURE LIKE *ME*...?

DO YOU MEAN, AN *ANIMAL*?

THIS INTERVIEW IS OVER.

I'M ONLY SAYING --

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS THAT SAHARA'S LOVE FOR ME IS COMPARABLE TO THE LOVE A GIRL FEELS FOR A *DOG*...

WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO *BARK*, MISS CUSSICK?

MY LOVE, CALM YOURSELF.

NO, SAHARA, THEY CAN SAY WHAT THEY WANT ABOUT ME, BUT WHEN THEY IMPUGN *YOUR* DIGNITY, WHEN THEY BELITTLE THE *LOVE* IN YOUR HEART...

THEY MUST LEARN THAT MY PATIENCE IS NOT TO BE TESTED.

OBADIAH, LET THEM STAY. LET US ANSWER THEIR QUESTIONS -- IT WILL HELP APPEASE PEOPLE'S MINDS AND HELP LIFT THE VEIL OF SUSPICION AND MISTRUST THAT SURROUNDS ALL OF MAPPO'S CHILDREN.

SAHARA, MY LOVE, YOU ALWAYS SEE THE BEST IN PEOPLE, AS YOU HAVE ALWAYS SEEN THE BEST IN ME. IT IS FOR THAT REASON THAT I LOVE YOU.

BUT NO MATTER HOW BRIGHT YOUR LIGHT BURNS, THERE WILL ALWAYS BE DARKNESS IN MEN'S HEARTS.

MISTER PURCHASE, PLEASE ESCORT OUR GUESTS OFF THE PREMISES.

BUT OBADIAH, YOUR FIANCÉE IS RIGHT, IF WE CAN'T GET YOUR STORY OUT THERE...

OUR STORY IS ALREADY OUT THERE, ISN'T IT, MISTER BAUER? IT'S CLEAR TO ME THAT YOU JUST WANT TO THROW A SPOTLIGHT ON IT FOR YOUR VIEWERS.

GOODBYE.

I KNOW YOU MEAN ONLY TO *PROTECT* ME, OBADIAH, BUT...

WELL, PERHAPS WHEN PEOPLE *SEE* THE INTERVIEW, THEY WILL MAKE UP THEIR OWN MINDS.

YOUR CAPACITY FOR FORGIVENESS NEVER FAILS TO AMAZE ME, SAHARA.

BUT LET US FORGET ABOUT THIS NOW. GO TO BED, I WILL BE WITH YOU SHORTLY. I HAVE JUST A LITTLE BUSINESS TO ATTEND.

VERY WELL.

BUT DON'T BE LONG.

MISTER PURCHASE?

YES, SIR?

THE CREW THAT WERE JUST HERE. I WANT YOU TO BE **ABSOLUTELY** CERTAIN THAT THEY **WON'T** BE TROUBLING US AGAIN...

IS THAT PERFECTLY CLEAR?

OF COURSE, SIR, SUCH TERRIBLE WEATHER... I'M SURPRISED ***ANYONE*** WOULD TAKE TO THE AIR ON A NIGHT LIKE TONIGHT.

IT MAY NOT BE THE BIG STORY THEY EXPECTED TO LEAD OFF THEIR MORNING SHOW, BUT AS THEY ARE SO FOND OF SAYING, "LIFE IS FULL OF SURPRISES," ISN'T IT?

VENICE BEACH

T. HIP ♡ MIKI

NOW THEN...

WHAT ARE *YOU* HIDING?

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The Last Thing I Remember...

Stewart

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"AUSCHWITZ
BEGINS WHEREVER
SOMEONE LOOKS AT
A SLAUGHTERHOUSE
AND THINKS:
THEY'RE ONLY
ANIMALS."

THEODOR W. ADORNO

"THE MORE WE
DO TO YOU, THE
LESS YOU SEEM TO
BELIEVE WE ARE
DOING IT."

DOCTOR JOSEF MENGELE

The last thing...

The last thing I remember...

GIVE IT UP, WOMAN.

The last thing I remember... is fire... death...

THERE'S NO ONE TO SAVE YOU NOW.

...and hopelessness.

No.

MAMA! MAMA! NO -- LET HER GO, LET HER GO!

That's not the last thing I remember. I remember my daughter, Sahara...

YOU MUNTS NEVER LEARN...

I remember my father...

Yes, I remember...

SAHARA!

GIVE IT UP, AND I'LL LET HER LIVE.

I remember...

"THE LIFE YOU REMEMBER IS *OVER.*"

"YOU MUST ABANDON IT AS READILY AS YOUR GOVERNMENT HAS ABANDONED YOU.

"YES, THOSE IN POWER IN THIS WORLD MAY *TALK* OF HUMAN RIGHTS...

"... BUT THEY KNOW NOTHING OF THE *ADVANCEMENT* OF THE HUMAN RACE.

"YOU WILL LIVE NOW FOR A MUCH GREATER PURPOSE.

"YOU WILL *NOT* BE MISSED.

MAPPO

"NEVERTHELESS, I WILL ENSURE THAT YOU WILL BE *REMEMBERED.*"

YOU WILL BE TREATED WELL. YOU WILL BE FED AND KEPT WARM.

BUT DO NOT BE MISTAKEN, YOU ARE THE PROPERTY OF ***MAPPO*** NOW.

AND YOU ***WILL*** COOPERATE.

WHAT ABOUT OUR *CHILDREN*? WHAT ABOUT OUR MENFOLK?

AH.

NOW ***YOU*** ARE TRULY A FINE SPECIMEN.

YOUNG AND STRONG. ***DEFIANT.***

A GOOD ***MOTHER.***

"YOU ARE EXACTLY THE KIND OF WOMAN I HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR..."

BREATHE DEEP... FORGET YOUR OWN LIFE, YOU ARE A VESSEL FOR NEW LIFE NOW...

But I do not forget...

I remember my daughter...

I remember my child....

...and I remember my Humanity...

...Sahara...

THE LAST THING I REMEMBER

By Starkings, David Hine & Rob Steen • Cover by J. Scott Campbell & Dare Stewart

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#7

CAPTAIN STONEHEART AND THE TRUTH FAIRY

A GRIM TALE OF BROKEN BONES & BROKEN HEARTS

VENICE BEACH · 2259

HMM.

To: HIP
MIKI

KRTK

AH...

THERE YOU ARE.

Little Girl Lost

by Starkings & Moritat

SO, WHAT AM I GOING TO DO WITH YOU NOW?

AGENT FLASK...

HEY, I FOUND THIS LITTLE ONE WANDERING ALONG OCEAN... SAYS SHE'S LOOKING FOR A FRIEND OF YOURS...

I JUST WANT SOMEONE TO TAKE ME TO THE *HOSPITAL!*

WHY? ARE YOU *HURT?*

NO! *EBONY* IS HURT! WHY DOESN'T *ANYONE LISTEN* TO ME?!

AH, EBONY...

THEN YOU MUST BE... *SAVANNAH!*

I'VE GOT THIS, ER... *VANITY*, RIGHT?

SHE'S ALL YOURS!

I WANT SOMEONE TO TAKE ME TO THE HOSPITAL! *PLEASE!*

I PICKED *DAISIES* FOR EBONY!

HE'S GOT SHOT AT.

I KNOW, HONEY, I'M VERY WORRIED ABOUT HIM, TOO...

BUT I CAN ASSURE YOU, HE'S IN GOOD HANDS, HE JUST CAN'T SEE YOU RIGHT NOW...

AND YOUR MOM MUST BE TERRIBLY WORRIED ABOUT YOU, RIGHT...? LET'S GIVE HER A CALL EH, SWEETIE?

NO -- DON'T CALL MY MOM OR SHE WILL BE REALLY, REALLY MAD.

I GOT VERY ANGRY AND SAID SOMETHING REALLY BAD AND SHE GOT TOTALLY CRAZY!

SWEETHEART, EVEN THOUGH YOUR MOM WAS ANGRY, I'M SURE SHE LOVES YOU AND MUST BE OUT OF HER MIND WITH WORRY RIGHT NOW.

I'M NOT GOING HOME!

MY MOM HATES ME!

HMM.

NO ONE TELLS *YOU* WHAT TO DO, HUH?

Y'KNOW, I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT YOU REMIND ME OF AN OLD PIRATE STORY I, UH, HEARD ONCE...

...A *PIRATE* STORY ?!?

OH, YEAH, I LOVE A GOOD OLD YARN ABOUT PIRACY ON THE HIGH SEAS...

Y'SEE, SOME BELIEVE THAT MAN, BEFORE HE WAS MAN, CRAWLED FROM THE SEA...

Some believe that Man, before he WAS Man, crawled from the Sea to make his fortune on Land...

...and he's spent his days ever since beggin' the Sea that She take him back.

Deep as Night, Wide as Tomorrow,
Alive with Light, Dead with Sorrow;
There be no force on Earth as Mysterious,
as Bountiful, as alive as THE SEA...

Keeper of Secrets, Killer of Empires,
Maker of Men, The Sea is ever changing,
and She never tells the same tale twice...

But SOME tales linger longer
or rise higher than others.
Ye can hear them in the Lone Cry of a Gull,
the Lullaby of a Whale.
Waves of Sorrow,
Waves of TRUTH.

Of these, none are so tragic...

...as the tale of The Stone Pirate and the S.S. HIPPOGRIFF, Scourge of all that be holy on the Seven Seas above, or even those Eleven below.

NO!

NO MAN TELLS THE SEA HOW TO FLOW, SO NO MAN TELLS ME WHAT TO DO OR WHERE TO GO!

SHRIIPP

CAPTAIN STONEHEART

as he was known by tremblin' children and ol' sea dogs, was a savage nightmare of a beast, feared not just for his sword or his ship or his might, but most especially for his TEMPER.

When his sights were set on a task, woe betide the man who dared to tell him "NO!" As it would be the last gasp t'escape his lips.

An ANGRY creature who'd grown from an ANGRY child, STONEHEART knew only the ways of WAR.

So it was that he started fighting as a boy... And he kept fighting through manhood... Fighting all the way to this day, which found him locked in a rage against the peaceful ship ANEMONE.

No amount of fighting, or WINNING, ever eased the grip of anger on the captain's heart... and today his mood was ESPECIALLY vile...

The Anemone had not fired a shot, nor crossed his bow.

Stoneheart attacked the vessel for no other reason than that her captain had asked to let them pass first through a fickle bit of narrows.

When the last of the wounded fell silent and the Anemone's secrets lay bare, one of his men cried out...

CAP'N! IN THE HOLD! IT'S AMAZIN'!

Stoneheart coolly replied...

I'LL TELL YE WHAT'S AMAZIN', YE BILGE RAT... ONLY THAT WHAT YE CAN SELL, STEAL, OR EAT!

Never did it cross his mind, that the fragile thing that lay below... would change his life FOREVER...

Seeing the Fairy, the Captain felt a fleeting connection to her, trapped and alone, and so very far from home.

But it did not hold.

Instead, he found himself planning the great BADNESS that could be done with the power of a fairy, for as we all know, the magics of fairies are ESPECIALLY strong, and strong magics make a stronger pirate.

In her beauty, the fairy in the bottle was without rival in the Heavens, or the Earth, or the stuff of men's dreams. A wee thing, like a star plucked from the sky and set behind glass.

LUMINESCENT. RADIANT. PERFECT.

After a hideous description of the enemies he'd slay and the villages he'd pillage – omitted here for the faint of heart – the Fairy simply smiled up at Stoneheart, and somehow looked through him, and said,

FOLLOW YOUR HEART, AND PARADISE CAN BE YOURS. THAT IS THE TRUTH.

Laughing a little too hard, the Captain boasted,

SINCE MY HEART HAS LONG BEEN DEAD, WE'LL FOLLOW SOME OTHER PART O'ME INSTEAD!

But he found with great surprise that he avoided her eyes as he covered her cage with his hat.

Alone with the Fairy in his quarters, Stoneheart's mind began to race. He imagined the kingdoms he could rule, the history he could write, all that could be accomplished with the power of that little beastie! However, where his heart was bound by anger, his mind was tethered by one thing only... GREED.

TREASURE. GOLD. LOOT. BOOTY.

Stoneheart unrolled a weathered map, a special map, and pointed to the place where even the greediest of pirates might find satisfaction...

MYSTERY ISLAND!

MYSTERY ISLAND, where GOLD rains from the clouds, the rivers all run with RUM, and a Pirate can pillage in STYLE! Mystery Island had haunted the dreams of countless pirates before Stoneheart, all of whom perished on their quest for the ultimate prize. For along with being the wealthiest spot in this green earth, Mystery Island was also by far the most dangerous. Unless...

CAN YE DO IT, YE *VILE* WEE THING? CAN YE GET ME T'*MYSTERY ISLAND?*

PAST THE SLITHERIN' SEAS AN' THE FOREST O'FIRE, THE GREAT HAG OF HARUMPFF AN' THE SKELETON MIRE?

After one too many a poke from the stonehearted captain, the Fairy nodded... she could do what he asked, but added, with a look of deep sadness...

THE TRUTH IS, SIR, I DON'T WANT TO HELP YOU. I JUST WANT TO GO HOME.

IF YOU COULD HELP ME GET HOME...

But Captain Stoneheart heard only what he WANTED to hear... In the morning they would sail for MYSTERY ISLAND! And TONIGHT...

Tonight they would CELEBRATE!

Stoneheart dropped anchor, loaded his rowboats with all the mead & meat & mean little scalawags they could carry, and set off for his favorite stretch of sand...

DANCE, YE RUM-ADDLED CUTTHROATS! DANCE!

It took Stoneheart a moment to understand exactly what the wee lassie was saying, as the mead was a potent brew. She pointed through the glass at the patch of flowers growing out along the edge of the beach. Seeing them, Captain Stoneheart swung the fairy's jar around, straightened his cuffs and cock'd his hat...

And began a slow and steady process of crushing each and every daisy beneath his heel.

GOOD DEEDS, EH?

LOOK HOW LONG THOSE LAST!

The fairy fell silent with fear & surprise.

When his stomping was done, the Captain turned to the fairy, who looked smaller somehow and pale. She asked in a voice hoarse with sorrow how he could be so horrible. To this, the captain simply smiled and said...

NO ONE TELLS THE WIND HOW TO BLOW, AND NO ONE TELLS *ME* WHERE I CAN'T GO!

There, the Cap'n sang songs of glory and guts. His men crooned along, dancing like lunatics in the bonfire light.

By any measure, it was a night of manic merriment enjoyed by madmen, until...

WATCH YOUR FEET, PLEASE, SIR...

The Fairy called to Captain Stoneheart from her gilded cell.

YOU ARE CLOSE TO A FIELD OF COCONUT DAISIES.

COCONUT DAISIES ARE VERY PRECIOUS, CAPTAIN. EVERY ONE THAT BLOOMS IS GROWN FROM A GOOD DEED, WHICH IS WHY THEY RUN SO WILD!

THE TRUTH IS ONE GOOD DEED LEADS TO MANY, MANY MORE! IF YOU WOULDN'T MIND, PLEASE JUST DANCE SOMEWHERE ELSE, THAT THE DAISIES MIGHT LIVE.

The fairy sobbed through the night long after the rest of the pirates fell to sleep... her tears unheeded... by all but ONE. Even though his head was still clouded by drink, Stoneheart heard her. He was surprised, not to mention irritated, that the cries bothered him at all... he was made MANY people cry. Women, children, grown men... But not ONE had ever kept him from going to sleep.

MUST BE *FAIRY MAGIC*... SHE'S TRYING... TO *TRICK* ME INTO DOING SOMETHING... STUPID.

Satisfied that he was onto her, the Captain stuffed his ears with guncotton and finally fell into a restless, dreamless sleep.

The journey to Mystery Island began with a task that set MOST pirates to tears – A trek through THE SLITHERING SEA!

EVERYONE knew that the trip should not be undertook, lest one liked the STING o' FANGS and the taste o' VENOM – but NO ONE told Stoneheart what to do...

GIVE ME *LIGHT*, FAIRY, THE MEANS TO PULL MY SHIP THROUGH THE SLITHERING SEA, AND WITH EACH FOOTFALL, I'LL *CRUSH* THOSE SLIPPERY SODS!

THE TRUTH IS, CAPTAIN, YOU COULD JUST GO AROUND. 'TIS ONLY A FEW WEEKS YOU'LL LOSE, SAVING THOUSANDS OF SNAKES THAT MIGHT OTHERWISE DROWN.

SSSSSSS

The CAPTAIN ignored her of course, commanding her power toward the wriggling waves below, so the Hippogriff sailed through, and the snakes were laid low...

But as he ploughed his way through, Stoneheart couldn't help notice how much the hisses of the serpents sounded like cries for help...

SSSSSSSAVEUSSSSSSSS

Days later, the crew of the Hippogriff faced an even deadlier challenge, THE FIRE FOREST whose every leaf was a hungry tongue of FLAME!

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO DOUSE THESE FLAMES, FAIRY?

Demanded the captain, and the Fairy, happy to oblige, produced a tiny tea service. Thinking she was having a laugh at his expense, the Captain's blood began to boil and he screamed,

THIS?!? WITH THIS TINY THING YOU EXPECT ME TO PUT OUT A RAGING FIRE?!

The FAIRY smiled and almost whispered,

THE TRUTH IS, CAPTAIN, EVEN A RAGING FIRE STARTS WITH A TINY SPARK, JUST AS A FRIENDSHIP GROWS FROM A TINY GESTURE.

TRY IT AND YOU'LL SEE WHAT I MEAN.

So Stoneheart commanded his scurvy crew to grab the miniature tea cups, perfect and ever-filled with a magical Raspberry tea. It was quite a sight, men with arms like sides of beef, their pinkies to the side as they doused the flames, and as a result an unimaginable thing happened...

Captain Stoneheart LAUGHED.

HAH! HA HA HA HA... AHAHAHAHAHAHAR!

YOURS IS THE LAUGH OF A MAN WHO DOES NOT LAUGH MUCH.

The Fairy said,

WHERE I COME FROM, PEOPLE LAUGH ALL THE TIME.

THERE'S NEVER ANY FIGHTING, EVERYONE'S ALWAYS DANCING... IT'S PARADISE.

Stoneheart gasped...

NO *FIGHTING*? NO *SWORDS* OR *STONES*? NO *GUNS* OR *GARROTTES*? THEN HOW DO YOU GET ANYTHING *DONE*? HOW DO THOSE IN CHARGE *STAY* IN CHARGE?

TRUTH IS, WHEN EVERYONE WORKS TOGETHER AND EVERYONE BELIEVES IN A THING, NO ONE'S IN CHARGE, BECAUSE EVERYONE SIMPLY DOES WHAT'S RIGHT.

The CAPTAIN pondered this. How... NICE the fairy's world sounded, if a little bit boring, and for a moment, he was lost in the sound of Fairy laughter.

Time passed. Nights fell and days broke, and then... in a particularly quiet portion of THE DOLDRUMS, one night fell particularly hard on the crew of the HIPPOGRIFF.

Sailing through inky waters, the ship had disturbed the watery graves of **THE SLEEPLESS SAILORS**, poor wretches who loved nothing but the sea, and had lost their very souls to the depths.

Drawn to the Hippogriff by the light cast by the TRUTH FAIRY as moths to a flame, the undead creatures clawed through dark waters, strong wood and soft pirates, yearning ever closer to her soothing glow.

Stoneheart roared –

WHAT DO THEY WANT ?!?

TRUTH IS, SIR, I THINK THEY WANT ME. DARKNESS **ALWAYS** CRAVES THE LIGHT...

AND IN THIS PLACE I FEAR I'M **TOO** BRIGHT.

The Captain pulled the Fairy up against his chest like a glowing doll, yet still the Sleepless Sailors moaned at the sight of her, and their cries drove the captain mad.

Tearing through the animated corpses like a typhoon, Stoneheart lost himself in a haze of rage and blood, and cried out,

NEVER! **SHE'S MINE!**

SHE'S... SHE'S MUCH TOO BEAUTIFUL FOR THE LIKES OF **MONSTERS** LIKE YOU!

TOO BEAUTIFUL, TOO... KIND. TOO **BRIGHT!**

He hid her then, under his vest, next to his heart... and simply STOPPED FIGHTING. And as the Sleepless Ones lost sight of the Fairy... lost all hope of the warmth such cold things crave, they dropped their arms, and fell back into the sea.

For a long while, the Captain did not move, silent, lost in the warm glow against his cold body...

Then the Fairy spoke,

TELL THE TRUTH, SIR, PLEASE...

WHY ARE YOU SO ANGRY?

No one had ever dared ask him such a thing before, and he thought he'd just throw her overboard that instant...

But he didn't. Instead... he spoke from the bottom of his stony heart.

"I WAS *ALWAYS* ANGRY... BORN TO AN ANGRY FATHER WHO WOULD KICK ME AROUND WITH HIS WOODEN LEG. IN *HIS* WORLD NO GOOD TURN WENT UNPUNISHED, AND NEVER WAS I ALLOWED A GOOD DAY... THOUGH 'TWAS ALL I'D EVER WANTED AS A CHILD...

"IN THAT WAY, MY FATHER TAUGHT ME THE WAYS OF THE WORLD, THE WAYS OF MEN. I LEARNED THAT DREAMING AND BEING GOOD AND NICE GOT YE NOTHING BUT DEAD. TO SURVIVE, YE HAD TO SHOW NO MERCY. ASK NO QUARTER. YE STAKE YER CLAIM AND YE FIGHT AND YE KILL AND YE HOWL UNTIL THAT WHICH YE WANTED WAS YOURS.

"'TWAS A LESSON I LEARNED WELL. NOW, NO MAN TELLS ME WHAT TO DO. I TAKE WHAT I WANT AND I *SMASH* ANY WHO SAY DIFFERENT."

As he finished his story, he looked down at the Fairy to see her CRYING.

WHAT ARE YE CRYIN' ABOUT?!

He asked, and she started to speak... but stopped, and climbed sadly into her cage.

Finally after a hundred heartbeats, she said...

TRUTH IS, SIR, EVEN IF YOUR HEART IS MADE OF STONE...

I THINK THERE'S STILL A LITTLE BOY IN THERE WHO WISHES THINGS WERE DIFFERENT.

AND THEY CAN BE, YOU KNOW... IF YOU LET THEM.

The Captain looked at the little wisp of a thing and said,

TRUTH IS... NO ONE TELLS THE WIND HOW TO BLOW... AND NO ONE TELLS ME WHERE TO GO. 'TIS THE ONLY WAY I KNOW.

Stoneheart watched as she covered herself with Daisy leaves, and wept herself to sleep.

Two days off from MYSTERY ISLAND, the Hippogriff was set upon by the vilest thing crawling through the world's waters.

THE GREAT HAG OF HARUMPF!

A horrendous old thing that dined on the dark souls of evil pirates, the Hag's wickedness was fed by the bad deeds of others, and when the Hippogriff sailed her way, she sensed a satisfying meal!

She tore at the Hippogriff with her HAIR OF BROKEN DREAMS, and lashed at the crew with her foul stench of confusion. No cannons could harm her. No blades could cut her. As she lifted the ship from the water with a cackle that would chill an iceberg...

Even CAPTAIN STONEHEART felt for the first time, in a life filled with pain, that his end was near...

So he reached for his greatest weapon, that wee bit of magic fluff, but with a start, Stoneheart realized that the Fairy's cage had toppled from its perch, and its golden clasp had broken.

The Truth Fairy stood at the port side porthole... a wing flap away from freedom, and he, powerless to stop her, for as you know, while the Great Hag of the Sea could eat the skin off an old pirate's bones, she had no power over Fairies!

As the cold grip of death tightened, Stoneheart looked into the Fairy's eyes, waiting for her to fly off and leave him to die with his crew... And she should, he thought, for he knew he deserved no better...

But she did not flee.

The Truth Fairy flew madly around the Hag in an attempt to scare her away.

... A GOOD DREAM.

Down, down, deep inside the dark recesses of the Captain's twisted heart, the Truth Fairy found a Good Dream that sparkled with happiness. A dream buried so far down inside him, the Captain hardly remembered dreaming it at all...

But there it was... Captain Stoneheart and the Truth Fairy, DANCING. PLAYING. HAPPY.

Even the Great Hag of Harumpf could not withstand the power of such idyllic imaginings, and she fled, back to the depths for another thousand years of solitude, anger, and regret.

Meanwhile, above...

The Crew hailed Captain Stoneheart as their hero, for finding a way to outsmart the Hag. But he did not share in their revelry. He knew he'd done nothing but dream... it was the Fairy... The Fairy who COULD have left them all to perish, but instead had saved his dirty band of fools.

The crew's revelry continued long into the night, but Stoneheart did not dance, or drink, or sing pirate songs...

Instead, he looked at maps...

...made notes, and, as his crew slept...

Stoneheart changed course.

The crew of the ship was shocked, and no one more so than the CAPTAIN, who thought for sure that the Fairy must have suffered a concussion during her fall.

But the Hag was neither distracted nor persuaded to leave by the Truth Fairy's antics, so with a wink and a flash, the Fairy dove for the Captain faster than the Hag's lightning strike...

And from his stony heart, she pulled the one thing that she knew would scare away an old sea hag who dined on Dark Thoughts...

The air was heavy with music and laughter, the smell of Jasmine, clover, and spun candy. The dew on the leaves was perfume, and the sand on the beach was powdered sugar. Fairies of all shapes and sizes flitted in and about the glorious village, at peace, in love, and at one with all that was good about the world.

For the first time since he could remember, **Captain Stoneheart felt JOY.**

Even his crew, a vile and scurvy lot, could not maintain dark thoughts in their minds. The greed and passionate pursuit of Mystery Island all seemed... SILLY now, for what treasure, what baubles, what streets of gold could compare to this...

PARADISE.

The Truth Fairy turned to him with questions obvious, but he stopped her with one of his own.

WHY DIDN'T YOU LEAVE US WHEN THE HAG ATTACKED US?

Through tears of joy, the Fairy Maid replied,

TRUTH IS, I THOUGHT THAT MAYBE IF SOMEONE DID SOMETHING KIND FOR YOU, YOU MIGHT REMEMBER KINDNESS IN YOUR OWN HEART... AND I WAS RIGHT.

Stoneheart looked at her, long and deep, and said,

I'M NOT SURE IF THAT BE TRUE... NOT SURE IF I'VE GONE MAD, OR I'M JUST PAYING DOWN A DEBT... BUT IT DOES FEEL *NICE.*

COME... She said,

LET ME SHOW YOU HOW NICE IT CAN BE.

The next morning, at dawn's break, Stoneheart woke the Truth Fairy, with a strange sound in his voice.

GET UP, GIRL! THERE'S WORK T'BE DONE! HARD, *HARD* WORK!

By the time she'd wiped the fairy dust from her eyes, she realized what lay within the voice of the grizzled old Captain...

'Twas the sound of a smile.

The vicious Stone Pirate, Scourge o' the Seven Seas above and the Eleven below... ...had brought her HOME.

And she did.

The Festival to Celebrate the Truth Fairy's Return lasted for an entire week. It was glorious. Pirates who were once thieves and brigands took a sudden interest in smiling and play, tea parties and feng shui, and laughter... So much laughter.

The Captain, seeing his men at peace and the Truth Fairy radiant with joy, had decided to forego the quest for Mystery Island, and he felt proud about his choice. HE had chosen to reward the Truth Fairy's kindness. HE was in control of his destiny...

...and he wanted to lift a glass to celebrate. The Fairies who were partial to drinking drinks that were a little stronger than the Daisy Tea seemed to enjoy an Apple Wine, enchanted to be sure.

I THINK I SHOULD LIKE TO TRY THAT APPLE WINE OF YOURS, FAIRY, IT LOOKS LIKE GOOD FUN!

The fairy looked at the Apple Keg sadly, then flew to the Captain and fixed him with a gaze of such intensity he felt her stare brush up against his soul.

DO YOU LIKE IT HERE, GOOD CAPTAIN?

OF COURSE I DO! THIS IS PARADISE!

He said, a bit confused that she hadn't poured him a glass yet.

DO YOU WANT TO STAY?

FOREVER, IF YOU'LL HAVE ME!

He laughed, getting a little thirstier as he spoke.

THEN, THE TRUTH IS, YOU CANNOT DRINK THE APPLE WINE. IT IS A POWERFUL, MYSTICAL BREW, MEANT FOR FAIRIES ALONE. T'WOULD BE HARMFUL TO A MORTAL, SIR...

EVEN ONE AS STRONG AS YOU.

At this, the Captain snorted. He'd drunk everything from sea water to Kraken's blood, and had nary a hangover.

GOOD CAPTAIN THE TRUTH IS, IF YOU HEED THIS ONE REQUEST, AND STAY FAR FROM THE APPLE BREW, YOU AND I WILL LIVE HERE TOGETHER IN BLISS FOREVER...

BUT IF YOU DRINK THE WINE, ALL WILL BE LOST.

She touched his cheek with her tiny hand,

CAN YOU DO THAT FOR ME? FOR US?

Stoneheart pulled his eyes away from the cask, with a sigh...

AYE, FOR YE... FOR US, I CAN.

Yet even as she hugged him tight, the scent of apple and yeast tickled at his nose, and a black spot in his heart began to fester.

As you know, Stoneheart was just not accustomed to having his requests refused, ESPECIALLY not when all those around him were living their every wish. He tried, he did, to take the Truth Fairy's words to heart, he tried to enjoy the paradise he'd found. In this place, all sins had been forgiven, all hate had been washed away. He could laugh, he could dance, he could SOAR...

BUT THE TRUTH FAIRY HAD TOLD HIM THERE WAS SOMETHING HE COULD NOT DO. Even if she WAS the most honest and caring being he'd ever met... Even if it was true, that drinking the Apple Brew would somehow break her heart...

YOU DID NOT TELL CAPTAIN STONEHEART WHAT TO DO.

'Twas the one constant rule by which he lived his life. Still the Fairy's words rang in his ears...

'TIS SUCH A LITTLE THING, SUCH A SMALL REQUEST.
WE HAVE TEN THOUSAND OTHER WINES HERE,
ALL OF THEM THE BEST.
JUST LET IT GO, DEAR STONEHEART,
THAT'S ALL I'LL EVER ASK.
DON'T TASTE THE APPLE WINE,
AND IN LOVE'S GLOW
YOU'LL FOREVER BASK.

But as time passed, the Fairy's sweet words of reason were drowned by the whispering voices of treason...

What is she keeping from you...?

What's so special about that wine that YOU CAN'T HAVE IT...?

How can she say she's your friend, if she won't share EVERYTHING...?

Perhaps she doesn't TRUST you...?

Perhaps she thinks you're WEAK...?

WEAK? WEAKNESS WAS SOMETHING THE CAPTAIN COULD NEVER ABIDE.

So late one night, after the dancing and the plate spinning and the nightshade lighting... He crept, while all slept, to the Apple cask.

NO ONE TELLS THE SEA HOW TO ROIL, OR THE POT WHEN TO BOIL. NO ONE TELLS THE WINDS HOW TO BLOW, OR THE SUN WHERE TO GO.

I SHALL TASTE THIS BREW, AND SHOW THEM ALL THAT NO ONE TELLS ME WHAT TO DO. JUST A SIP WILL BE ENOUGH, TO SHOW THEM ALL THAT I'M STILL TOUGH.

The Sip became a Slurp. The Slurp became a Gulp. The Gulp became a Guzzle.

By the time the Guzzle became a bona fide Chug, Stoneheart was lost in the wine's enchantments.

Apple Wine, as the Truth Fairy warned, was simply not meant for mortals. For instead of making them feel good and light, it finds their dark thoughts and gives them form.

And Stoneheart, despite the love he'd received from the Fairy and her kin, still had demons plaguing his mind...

The night screamed through him in waves of fear and memories and dreams of vanquished enemies and all that he'd ever done wrong and all the bad he'd ever felt... and the dark and the monstrosity and anger anger anger and he that was the Scourge of the Seven Seas above and the Eleven below lived it all, in One Night...

UNTIL HE FELL, SPENT.

A state like sleep, but closer to death enveloped him for the next ten hours. When he finally woke, his head pounded like cannon fire, and his heart felt cold as ice...

But this was nothing to the horror he felt when his eyes agreed to focus again... ...and he saw what his foolish arrogance had wrought.

The fairy village, destroyed by his mad dancing and screams and dreams. His newfound family gone without a trace.

Even his own men, gone.

And the Truth Fairy... The best friend he'd ever had, crumpled in a heap, weeping.

It was the saddest sound he'd ever heard and ever would.

Even as he found the strength to claw his way to her, apologies from deep inside flew from his mouth...

I'M SORRY, FAIRY! I'M SORRY! IT-IT WAS JUST A SIP! JUST A LITTLE WINE!

TELL ME HOW TO FIX THIS!

TELL ME HOW TO MAKE IT BETTER!

TELL ME HOW TO MAKE IT BETTER

With a heart weary as she turned to him. With eyes burned by tears and sand and the scene behind her, she looked at him, through him, and said...

THE TRUTH IS... YE CANNOT FIX THIS, CAPTAIN. THE TRUTH IS, I ASKED YE BUT ONE FAVOR. ONE KINDNESS IN RETURN FOR PARADISE, AND MY UNDYING LOVE...

I ASKED YE TO TRUST IN ME AND LET GO... AND YE COULD NOT DO IT.

IN BREAKING THAT TRUST, YE BROKE MY FAITH... YE BROKE MY HOME...

YE BROKE MY HEART.

And, as her eyes fluttered closed for the last time, she whispered...

A sound erupted from the Captain then. A sound never heard before or since... The mighty Scourge o' the Seven Seas above and the Eleven below... Crying. His tears were torn from the bottom of his heart, where all stone had finally cracked away, leaving naught but sorrow.

The Captain's Stone Heart was BROKEN.

For hours he begged her to come back. Even after her body turned back into the Daisy from which she was born. Even after day turned to night and back again, no forgiveness came, no laughter was heard.

The Captain could not find another soul on the beach after that, neither fairy nor pirate. Some say they all turned back into daisies. Others say they rebuilt their homes in a land far away from pirates and mortals...

Captain Stoneheart would never know the truth.

He burned what was left of the village then silently turned and set off for the only home he'd ever know... The Sea.

Returning to the Hippogriff, alone and crewless, he somehow managed to turn the ship around and sailed off into the mists of legend.

Aye, but though he lurched that once proud battleship out to the bosom of the sea, his thoughts and his heart remained on the beach that day...

...burning with the fruits of his folly.

There are a thousand tales of the sea, but none so tragic as that of

Captain Stoneheart and the Truth Fairy

The tale of a creature who, after a lifetime of fighting, held paradise in his hand, but lost it... because he would not let go of the anger inside his stony heart.

That day marked the last voyage of the Hippogriff and the Stone Pirate. For that was the day he left the Island of Dreams...

...and took to the sad cold ocean, never to be heard from again.

JOE KELLY
CHRIS BACHALO
ARON LUSEN
RICHARD STARKINGS

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BUT... BUT THAT'S A *SAD* STORY!

THE TRUTH FAIRY DIED FROM A *BROKEN HEART!*

IT IS A *VERY* SAD STORY, LUCKILY, IN REAL LIFE, PEOPLE DON'T BREAK EACH OTHER'S HEARTS OVER SUCH SILLY LITTLE THINGS...

SAY, IT'S GETTING LATE, SAVANNAH... WEREN'T WE GOING TO GET YOU HOME TO YOUR MOM?

Y'KNOW, I IMAGINED STONEHEART WAS JUST LIKE YOU...

EXCEPT *HE* HAD A *SWORD* FOR A HAND, OF COURSE.

HEY! WHOSE *DOLLY* IS THAT?

OH... ER...

SHE'S SO CUTE!

Y'SEE... THAT'S A DOLLY THAT USED TO BELONG TO AN OLD, UM, FRIEND OF MINE...

CAN I HAVE IT?

WELL, UH, I'M SUPPOSED TO, UH...

THE, UM... THE THING IS...

I'LL TAKE REAL GOOD CARE OF HER... I PROMISE!

Y'KNOW... I THINK YOU WILL...

OKAY, KID... SHE'S YOURS.

DID ANYONE EVER BREAK *YOUR* HEART, CAP'N?

...

WELL, I THINK YOU JUST DID, SWEETHEART...

iFrog

To: HIP ♡ MIKI

"...AFTER ALL..."

"...WHO ELSE COULD BREAK THE HEART OF A BIG UGLY HIPPO LIKE ME, EH?"

EPILOGUE: DOWNTOWN L.A.

HUNH--

WHO IS IT...?

=KAFF!= =KAFF!=

WHO'S THERE?

OH, IT'S YOU...

WHERE'S THE IDOL?

I... =KAFF!= =KAFF! KAFF!= I *LOST* IT.

WHO HAS IT...?

WHO DID THIS TO YOU?

THE HIPPO. THE ONE FROM THE AGENCY...

BIT OFF MY TAIL... =KAFF! KAFF!= I HOPE HE *CHOKED* ON IT...

FLASK.

OF COURSE.

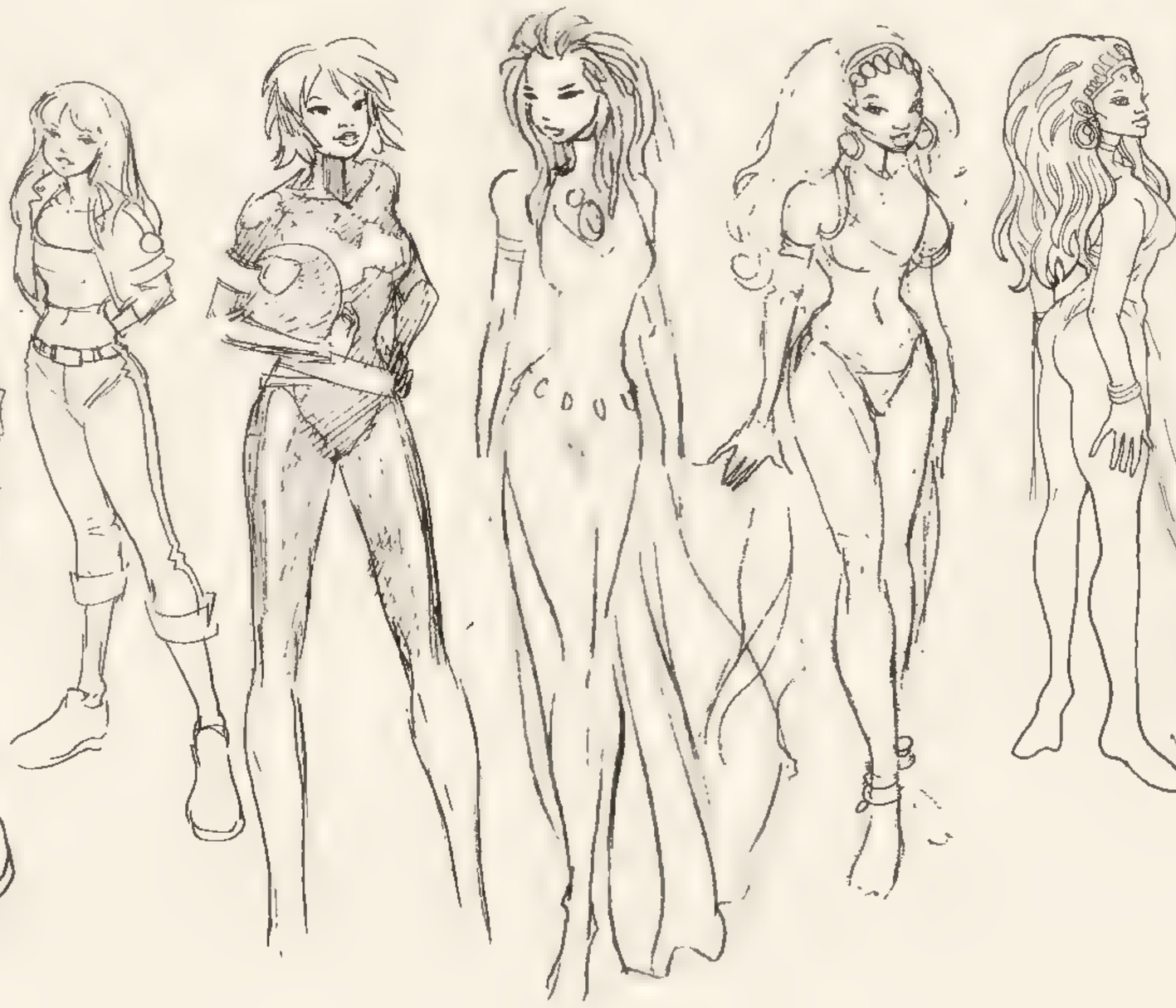
To Be Continued!

HIP 01

Looking over Moritat's sketches and layouts for his issues in this collection, I was astonished by the sheer volume and quality of his drawings. We were working so hard to get everything right, I sometimes took his willingness to push himself harder for granted. His art in this volume still attracts new readers today, and I'm glad ELEPHANTMEN has helped cement his reputation as a top industry talent.

HIP 02

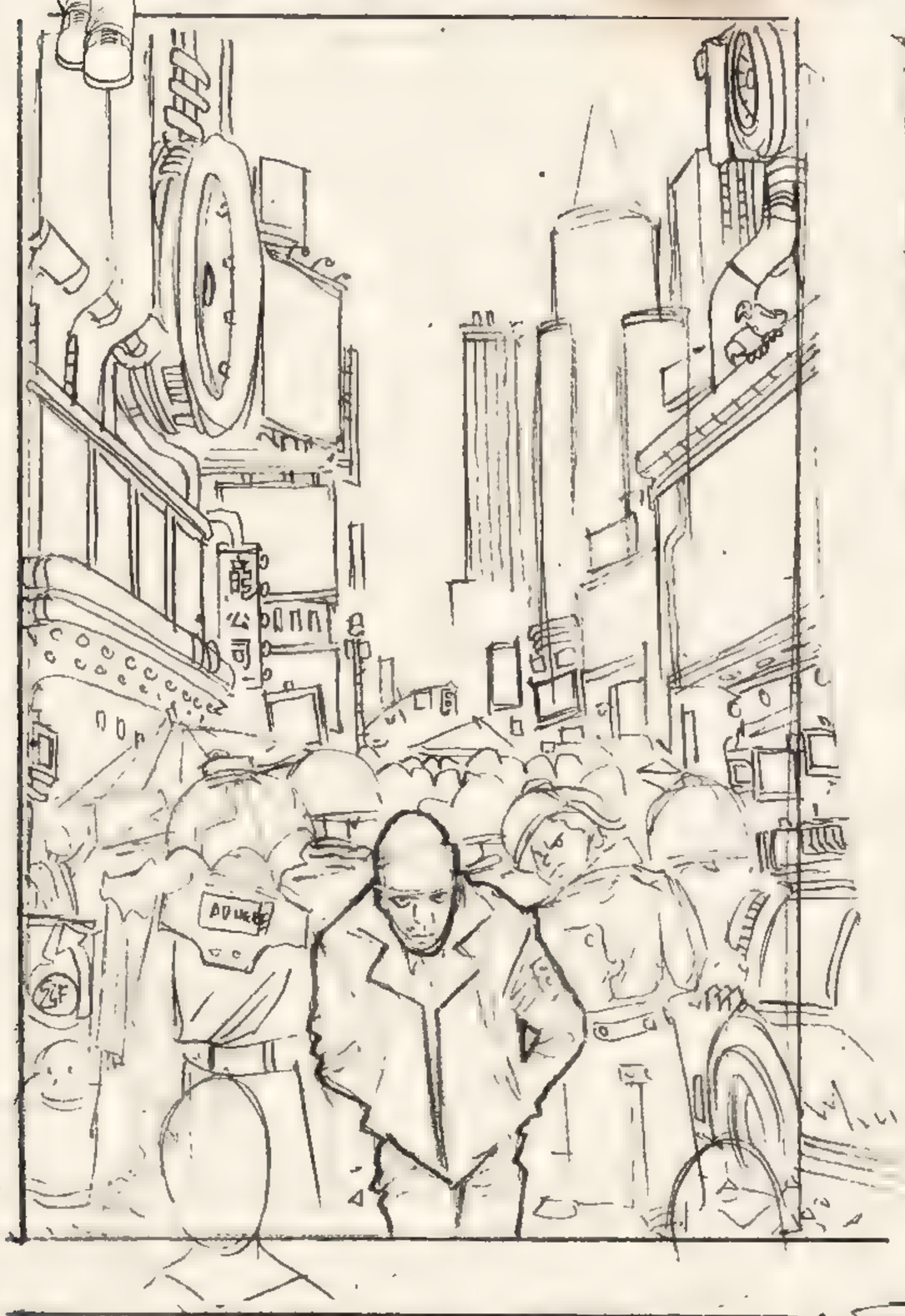
HIP 03

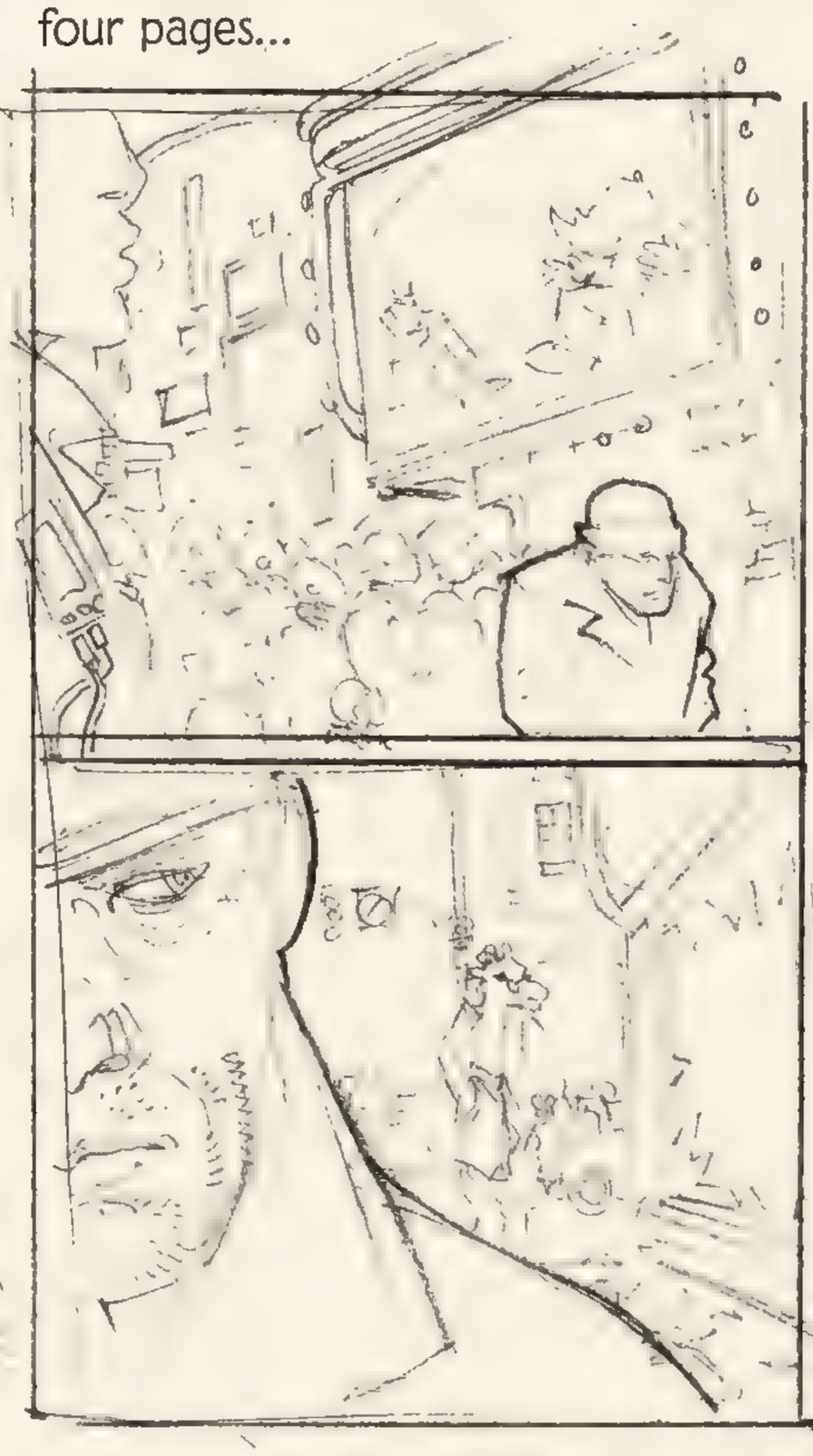


ELEPHANTMEN

Way back, artist Dave Gibbons had created the image below for me in the style of the WATCHMEN group shots used to promote that series. I felt we needed something similar to launch our MEN!

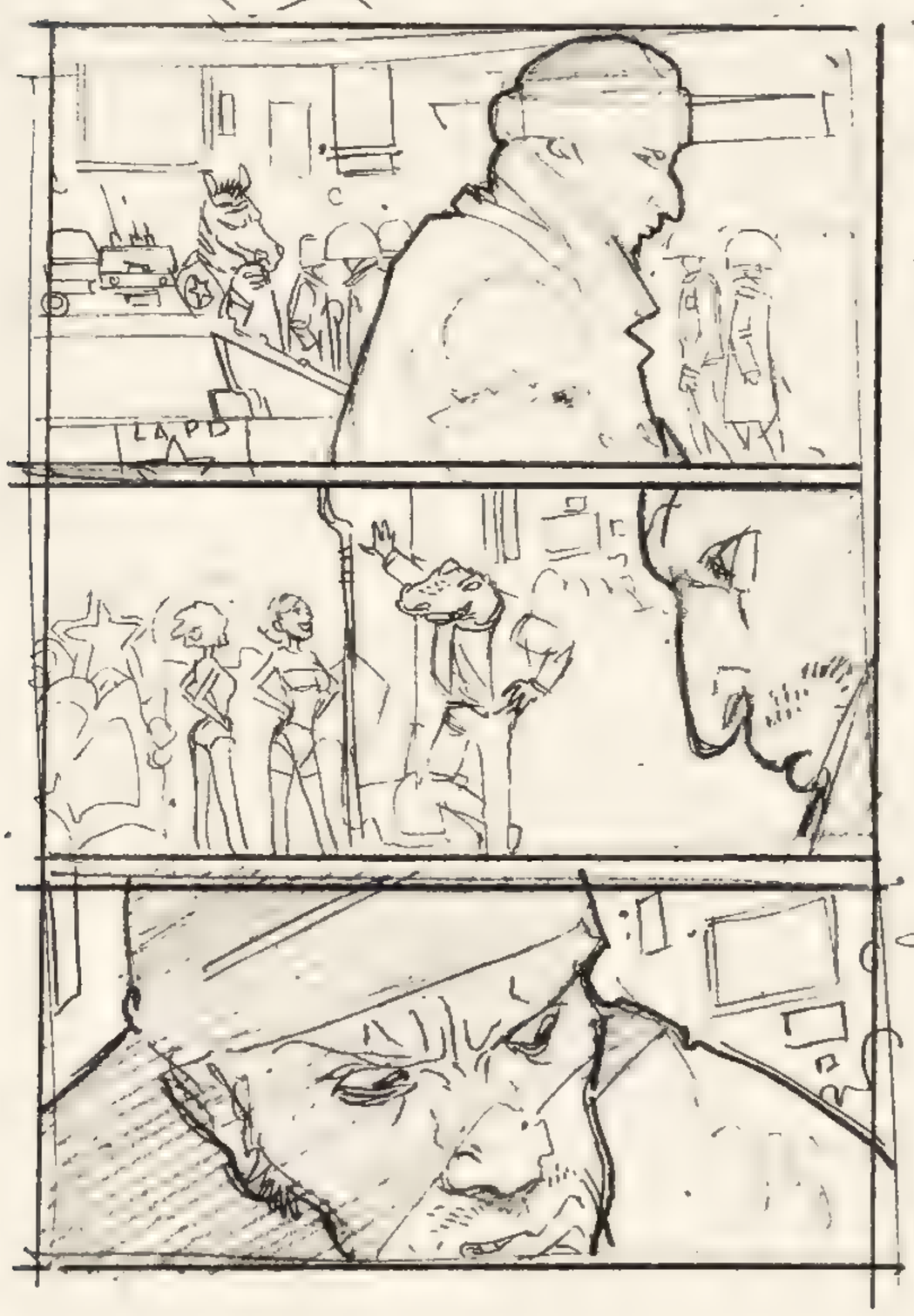
I originally sent Dave Gibbons the script for JUST ANOTHER GUY NAMED JOE (then called DON'T THINK OF AN ELEPHANTMAN), hoping that four pages by a 2000AD luminary would help draw in readers who loved DOCTOR WHO, DAN DARE, ROGUE TROOPER, and WATCHMEN just as much as I did. Dave was under an exclusive contract with DC at the time, but kindly remarked; "Nice script, though; one of those that turns to pictures effortlessly in the mind's eye..." Moritat subsequently did turn my words into pictures effortlessly, and set the tone for the whole series with just these four pages...





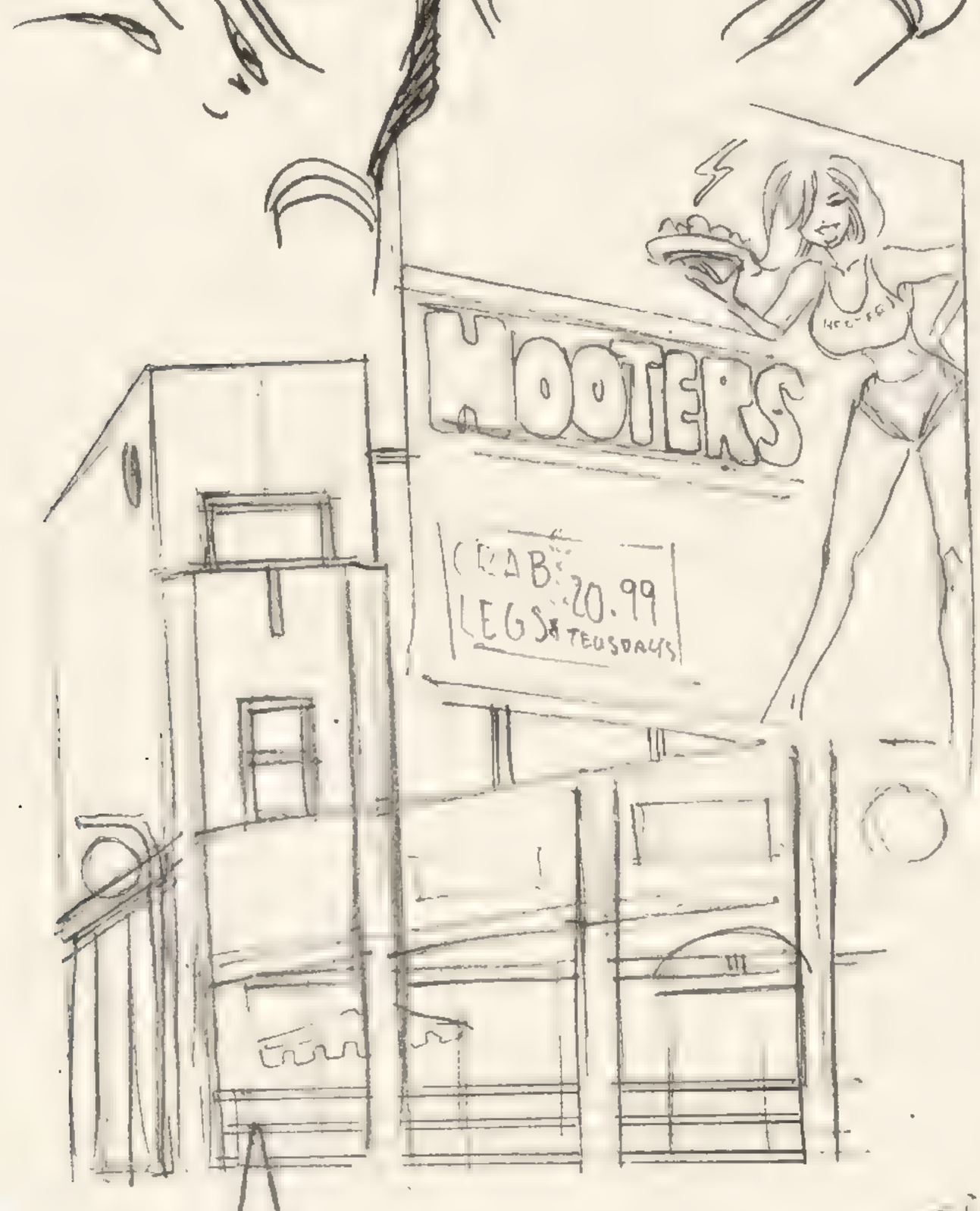
RICHARD -

I'M RETHINKING THIS PANEL. MAYBE HE'S FARTHER AWAY. LEADING UP TO BUMPING INTO HIP. WE GET CLOSER AND CLOSER.

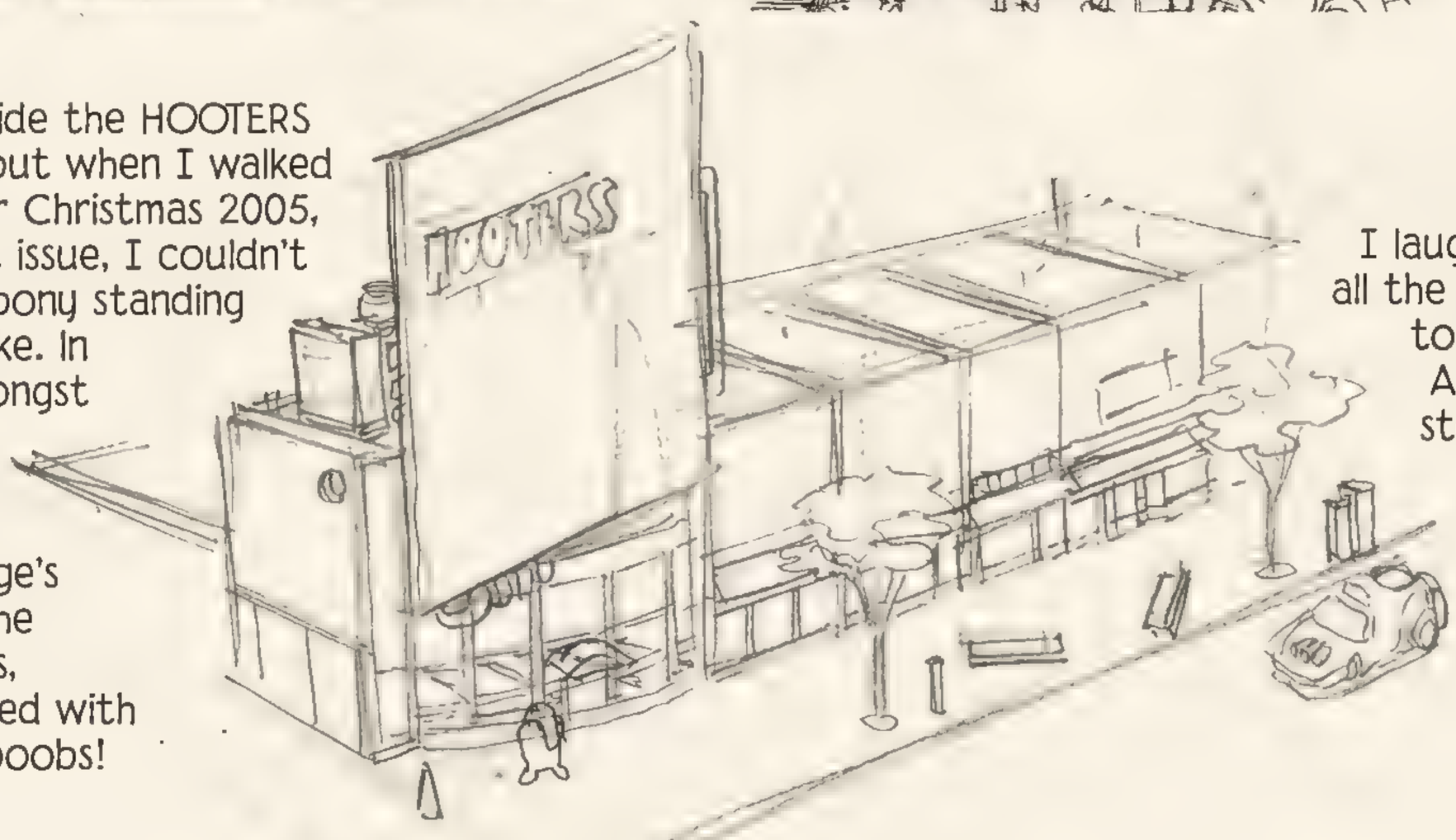


I started the ELEPHANTMEN series with Ebony Hide rather than Hip Flask to get a fresh angle on the origin of the characters, and, of course, to provide the Elephant suggested by the title of the series.

At some point between Ladrönn's beautiful cover for the first issue and Moritat's sympathetic portraits inside, Ebony evolved into a character even more tragic than I had imagined.



I've never been inside the HOOTERS in Santa Monica, but when I walked past one day over Christmas 2005, plotting out the first issue, I couldn't shake the image of Ebony standing outside having a smoke. In England, if you're amongst Big Hooters, you're referrring to Big Noses... Ebony has a big nose, geddit? Image's reputation was for the other kind of hooters, most closely associated with the restaurant. Yes, boobs!



I laughed all the way to the Apple store!

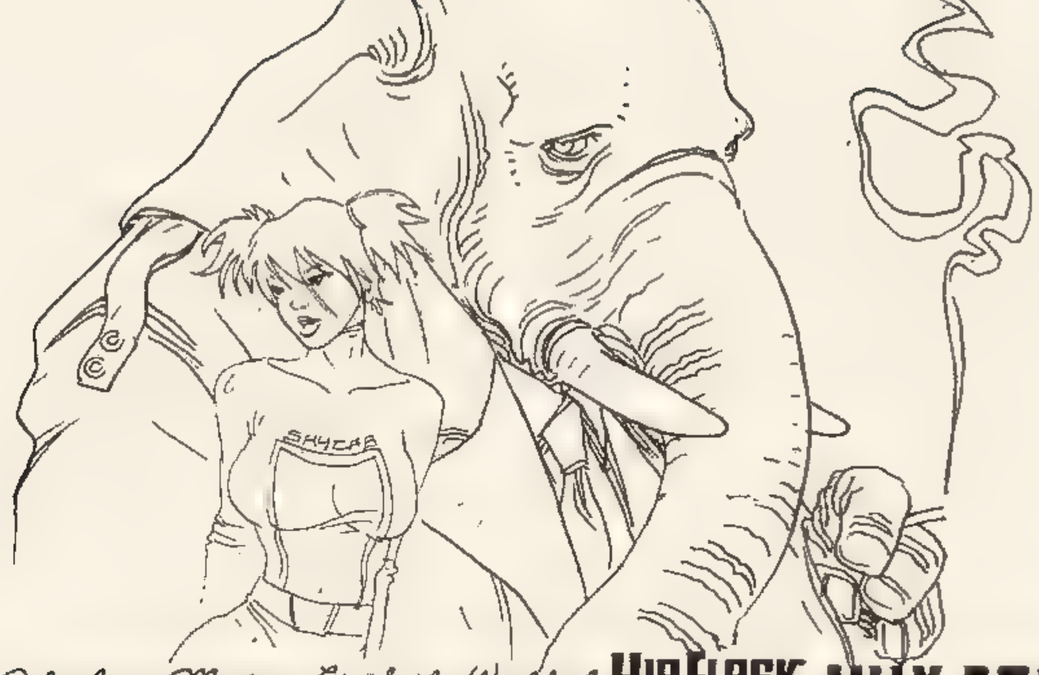
Moritat drew this picture of Harrison Ford and Robert DeNiro after STATIC MULTIMEDIA's review of ELEPHANTMEN (see the back of this volume). BLADE RUNNER is obviously an influence on ELEPHANTMEN... but what had escaped me until recently was the fact that the animal most closely associated with BLADE RUNNER is the owl from the first scene with Rachael. The owl, which hoots, is the mascot of Hooters. It's like we planned it! Deckard even appeared in these early sketches by Moritat, which is probably why Vanity is always eating noodles.

I had a very specific shot in mind for the opening page of the first issue, and mocked up the image you see top left to point Moritat in the right direction... his sketch above nailed it... even though Ebony is eight feet tall, the human girl above seems to dwarf him, and the title, which is actually a euphemism for Going to War, seems to be a question to the reader... but when Ebony turns on the next page, Savannah starts restoring his sense of perspective...

MORITAT
WONDERCON 2007

Moritat drew Savannah with braids at first, but it seemed overly cute to me and so I sent him pictures of my daughter and her familiar, Buttercup.

MORITAT
WONDERCON 2007



Tales from Mystery City & the World of **HIPFLASK JULY 2006**

STARKINGS · MORITAT · COMICRAFT · LADRONN

image ELEPHANTMEN

Tales from Mystery City & the World of **HIPFLASK JULY 2006**

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image ELEPHANTMEN

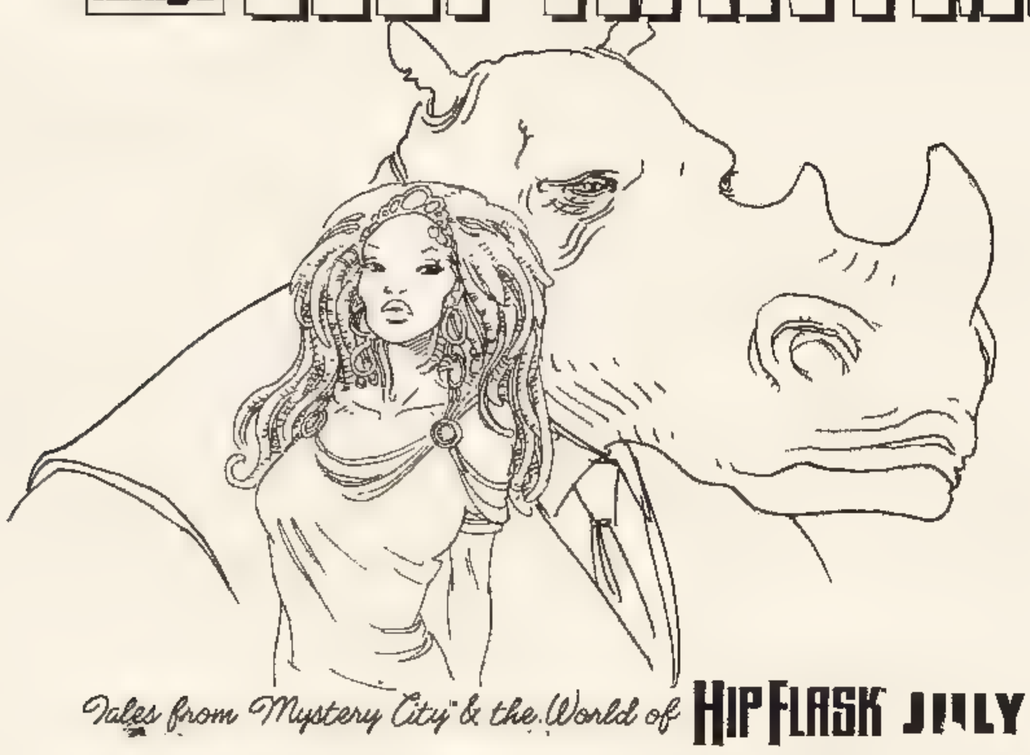

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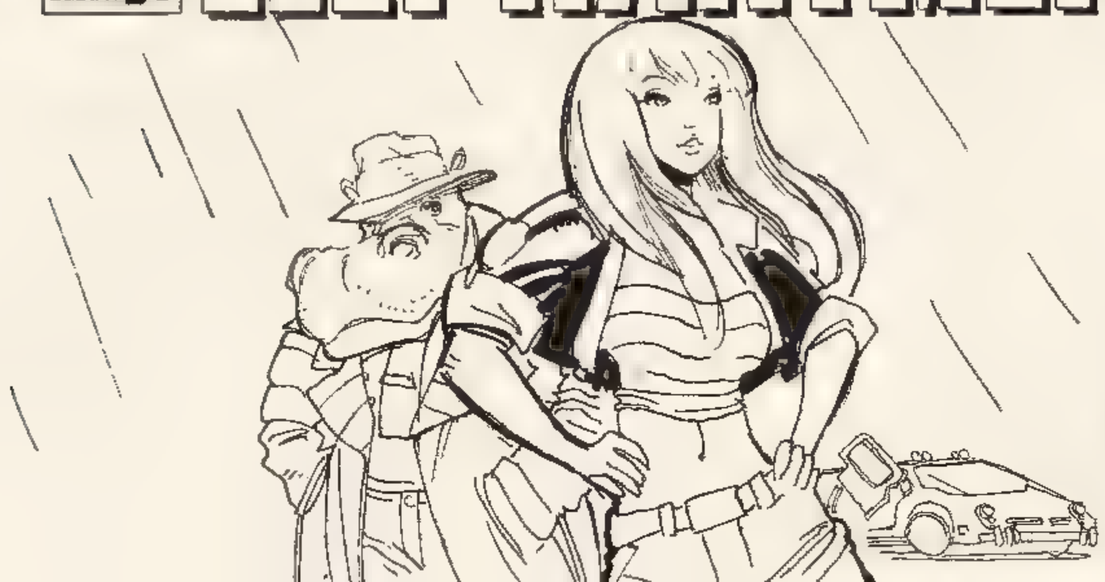
image ELEPHANTMEN



Tales from Mystery City & the World of **HIPFLASK JULY 2006**

The sketches of the ELEPHANTMEN couples featured here were given away at WizardWorld L.A in 2006. If you have one you don't see here, send me a scan at Richard@Comicraft.com!

Moritat put an inordinate amount of work into the flashback sequences in our first issue, as if demanding a whole three issue WAR TOYS mini series dedicated to the Elephantmen's guilty past...

ELEPHANTMEN

Tales from the **HIP FLASK**

STARKINGS • MORITAT • COMICRAFT • LADRONN

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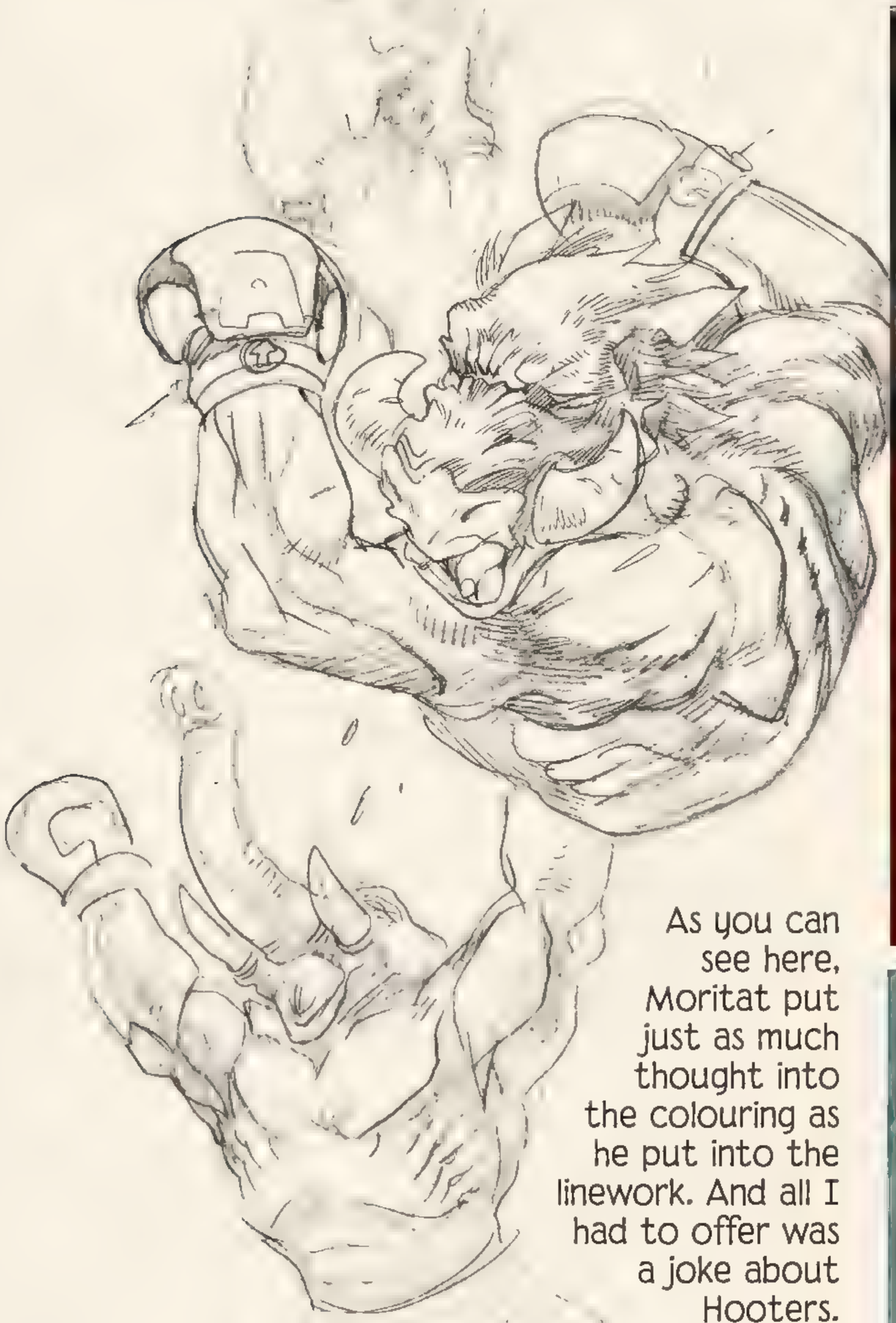
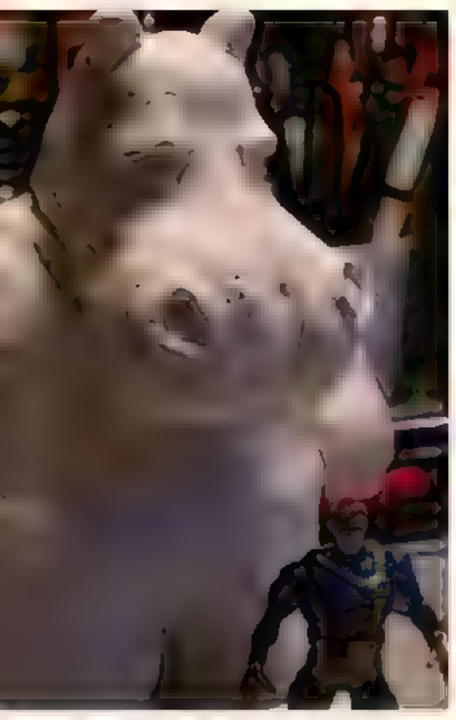
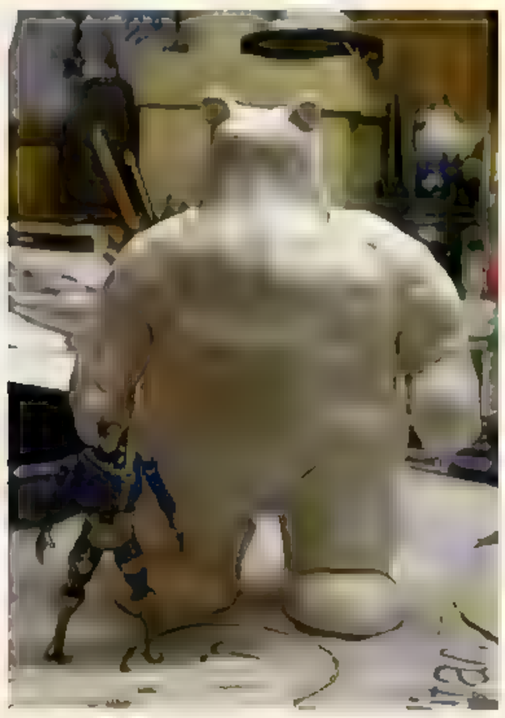
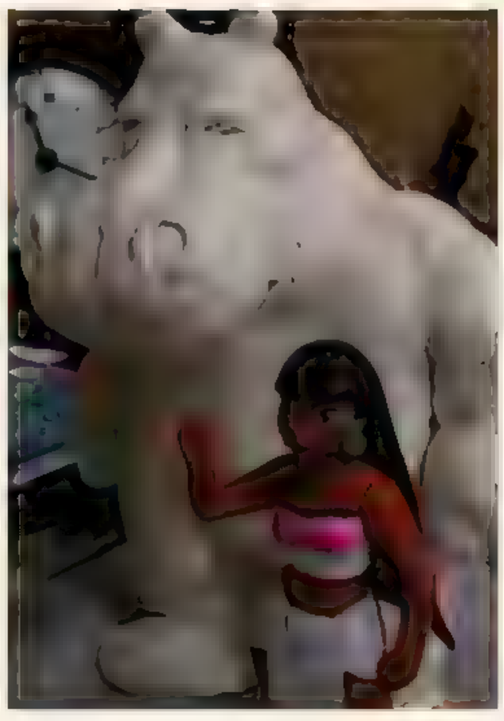


As you can see here, Moritat put just as much thought into the colouring as he put into the linework. And all I had to offer was a joke about Hooters.

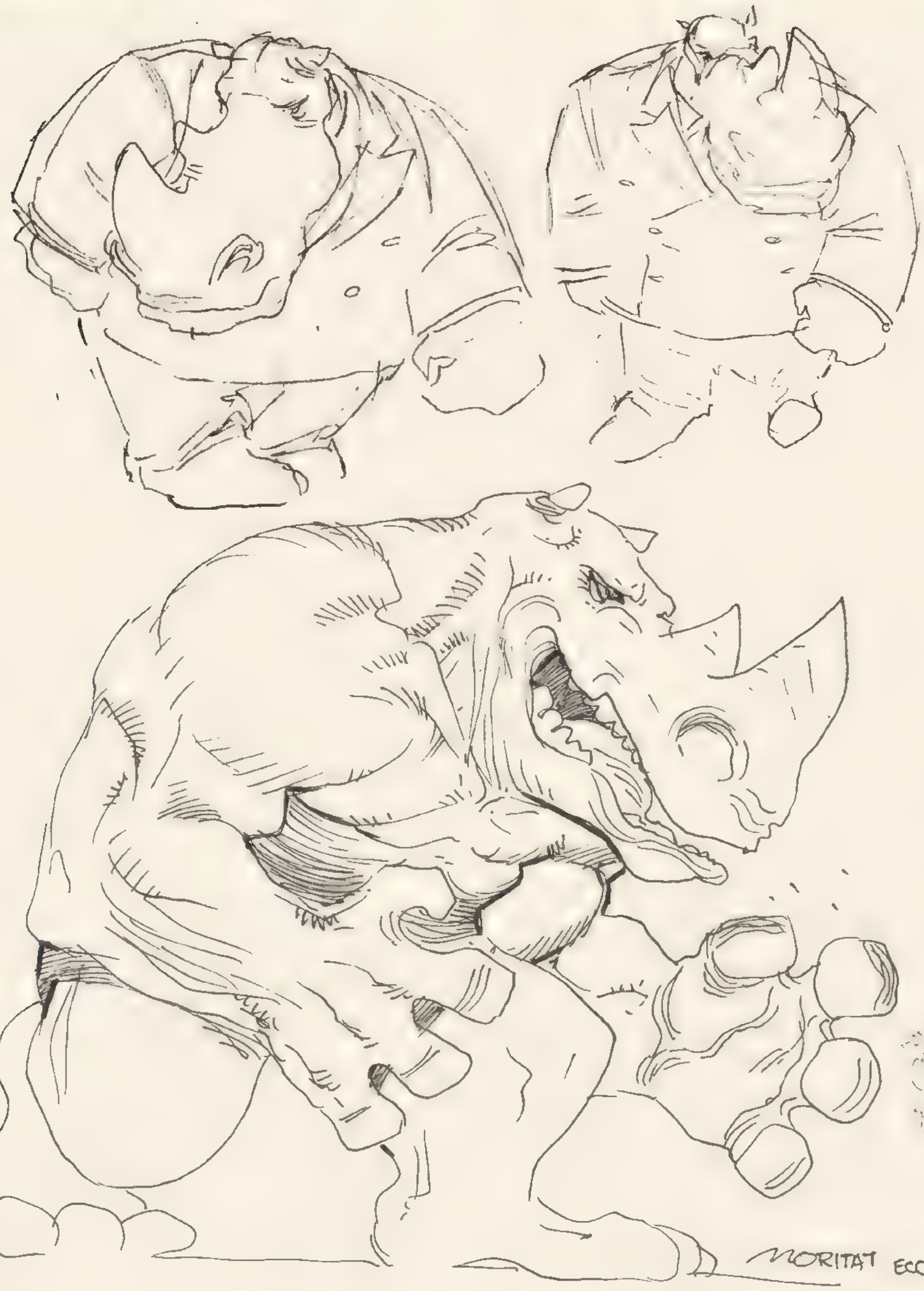
Toys for lighting reference.

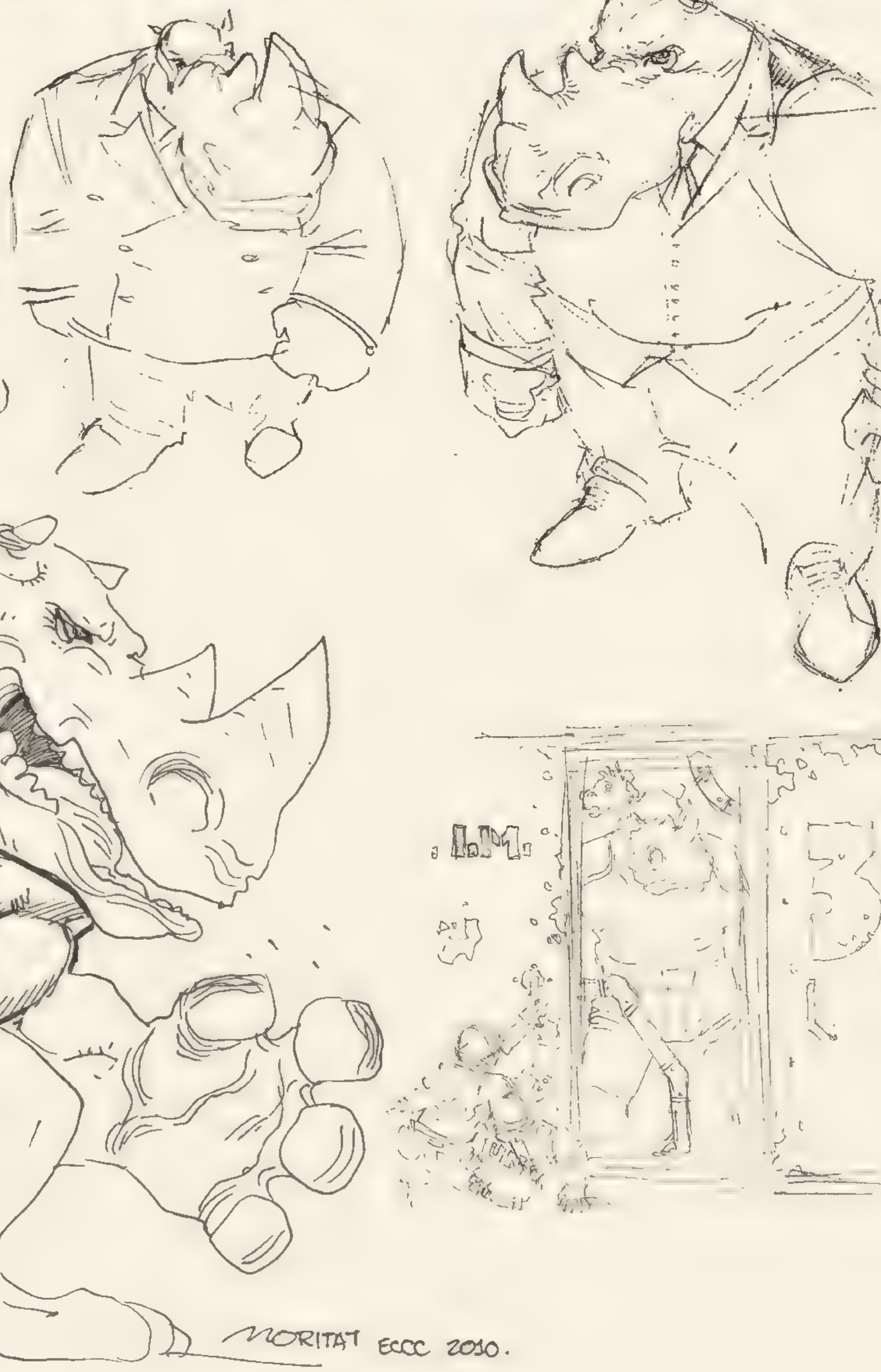






Sculptures by Jami Waggoner showing human/elephantman proportions.





MORITAT ECCC 2010.

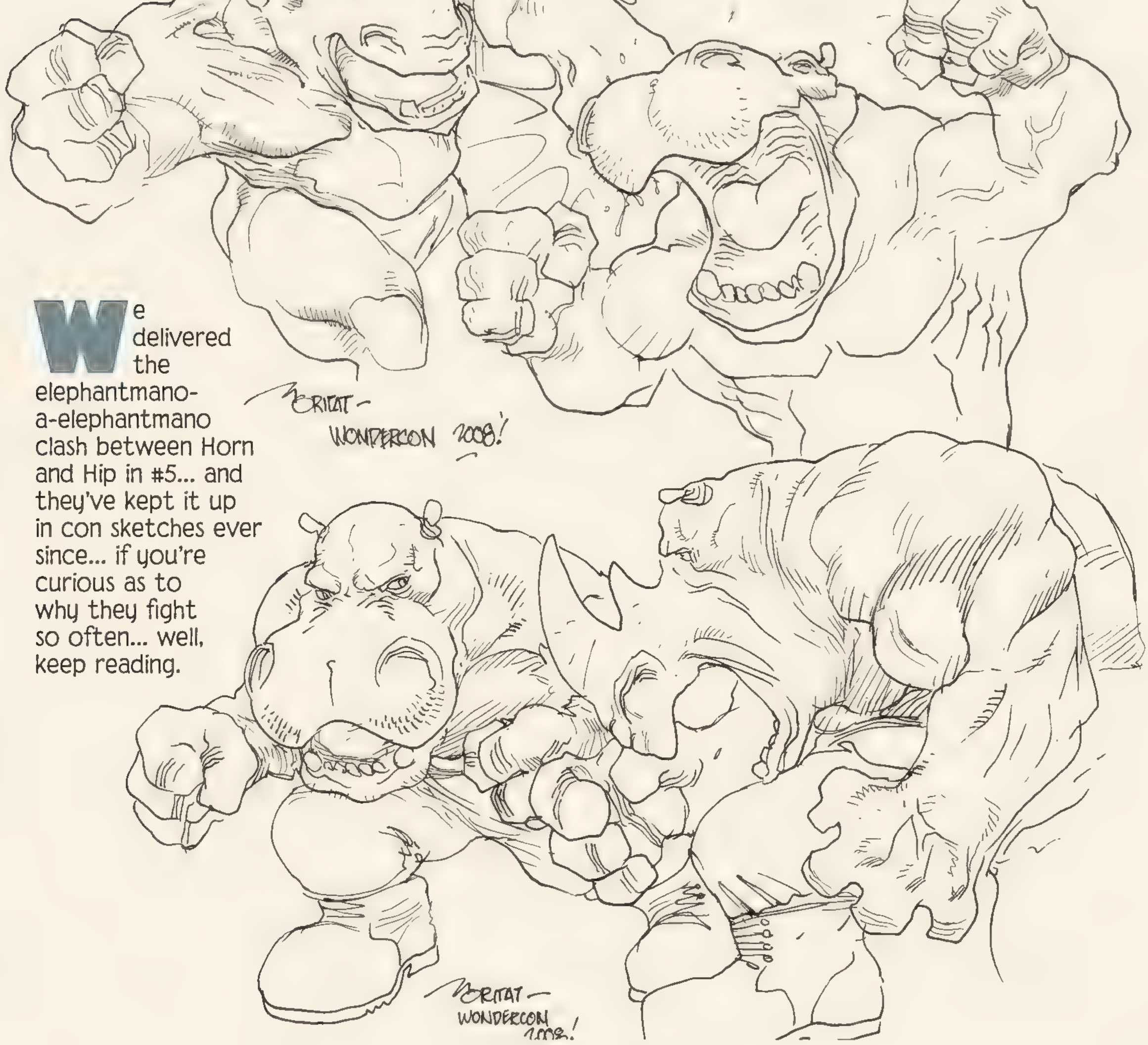
If you've ever seen Moritat draw at a show, you'll know that he seems to pull images out of thin air effortlessly. The drawings of Horn on this page perhaps give a glimpse into the research and practise that lies behind convention sketches like the two shown to the left here.

MORITAT. ECCC 2010.

MORITAT
WONDERCON
2007.

TO PAUL
I AM WAITING
FOR YOUR COMIC
NEXT YEAR!

MORITAT.
ECCC 2010.



MORITAT—
WONDERCON 2008!

We delivered the elephantmano-a-elephantmano clash between Horn and Hip in #5... and they've kept it up in con sketches ever since... if you're curious as to why they fight so often... well, keep reading.

MORITAT—
WONDERCON 2008!

MORITAT
WONDERCON
2007.

THE GENERAL IDEA!

I'm often approached by artists at shows who ask me if they could take a shot at drawing the Elephantmen. The three major contributors to ELEPHANTMEN so far, Ladrönn, Moritat and now Axel Medellin, didn't ASK me if they could draw the Elephantmen, they SHOWED me they could! The painting you see above was presented to me by Moritat as a "thank you," after I published his book with Steve Seagle, SOLSTICE. Chances are, if you asked me about drawing the Elephantmen recently, I showed you this page. Good Luck! I'll let Moritat himself have the last word here..

FEB 01.07

MORITAT
WONDERCON
2007.

MORITAT
WONDERCON
2007.

MORITAT
SAN DIEGO
2007.

MORITAT
AKA "JUSTIN"
NORMAN
SAN DIEGO COMIC CON 2007.

MORITAT.
SAN DIEGO COMIC CON 2007.

One last treat – although Moritat never got to draw Captain Stoneheart in ELEPHANTMEN itself, some fans still requested him at shows. We present a handful of those sketches here, including Moritat's three takes on Ladrönn's variant cover to issue #7, which follows overleaf...

Rich!

PULP SCIENCE FICTION!

ARE YOU READY TO BELIEVE?

FOR ME, THE 70s AND 80s were the heydays of science fiction. Everywhere I looked there were books, comics, movies and TV shows dedicated to Unknown Worlds and Space Odysseys – there was always a new series of DOCTOR WHO to look forward to on the BBC and ITV presented shows like UFO, SPACE 1999, THE TOMORROW PEOPLE and SAPPHIRE & STEEL.

WHEN I STARTED reading comics in 1971, the title that caused me to love comics was COUNTDOWN, a weekly British comic magazine featuring strips based on many of those same SF TV shows, as well as THUNDERBIRDS, CAPTAIN SCARLET, STINGRAY and FIREBALL XL5. The artwork, by creators such as Gerry Haylock, Frank Bellamy, Brian Lewis, Ron Embleton and Michael Noble, was of an incredibly high quality, made possible by the fact that generally they only had to produce two pages of colour – or grey wash – art each week. I wasn't aware at the time that many of the strips were reprints from a 60s comic called TV21, but that didn't matter, they were still great reading and there were no reprints of strips back in those distant days – the era of the trade paperback was still far, far away. Unfortunately COUNTDOWN only lasted two years but was replaced for me by LOOK-IN, another weekly based on TV shows with top artists drawing strips such as KUNG FU, TIMESLIP or MAN FROM ATLANTIS by Michael Noble, THE SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN by Martin Asbury, THE BIONIC WOMAN featuring the beautiful early work of John Bolton and THE TOMORROW PEOPLE by John M. Burns. The stories in both COUNTDOWN and LOOK-IN were written mostly by Alan Fennell or Angus Allan respectively, and were often more imaginative and engaging than the TV shows that inspired them. I also loved THE TRIGAN EMPIRE by Don Lawrence, a beautiful original painted SF story that was the only comic strip in the educational children's magazine LOOK AND LEARN.

In those dim and distant magical days, every kid at school was fascinated by the NASA moon landings and every boy had made the AIRFIX Saturn V kit, or was collecting PG TIPS' RACE INTO SPACE cards. Paintings of unfeasibly large spaceships by Chris Foss graced the covers of every other science fiction paperback and albums like ELO's OUT OF THE BLUE and JEFF WAYNE'S WAR OF THE WORLDS eagerly carried science fiction into the mainstream consciousness.

As a teenager I became engrossed in SF shows with more serious, down-to-Earth themes such as DOOMWATCH and SURVIVORS, and at the pictures I sought out movies such as PLANET OF THE APES, LOGAN'S RUN, SOYLENT GREEN, THE OMEGA MAN, SILENT RUNNING, ALIEN and BLADE RUNNER. In 1978 the fortnightly comic book STARLORD led me to 2000AD and the incredible work of writers John Wagner and Pat Mills and top British artists like Brian Bolland, Dave Gibbons, Kevin O'Neill, Mick McMahon and Ian Gibson. 2000AD presented a host of fantastic characters, outrageous stories and mind boggling concepts every week, including JUDGE DREDD, RO-BUSTERS, STRONTIUM DOG, ROBO HUNTER, HARLEM HEROES and NEMESIS. SF concepts and ideas flew so thick and fast it was easy to take the quality and volume of the work for granted, and even easier to forget that there had not been a comic like this before. In the same way that Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and Marvel Comics brightened up American comics in the sixties, the 2000AD creators revitalized British comics in the seventies.

DO YOU REMEMBER when SPIDER-MAN, THE UNCANNY X-MEN, THE FANTASTIC FOUR, SUPERMAN and BATMAN were not movie franchises but simply exciting comics full of interesting new characters, ideas and stories? Did it matter to you that characters like the Toad Men or The Terrible Tinkerer weren't entirely plausible? Were you excited by the idea of cities in bottles and Superman as a ghost or did you dismiss them as silly? How about Superboy engaged in fierce midair battle with a Sharkman? Concepts that might seem goofy or childish to you when you get older are always full of wonder and excitement to kids. For them, every turn of the page is another step into the Twilight Zone of imagination and possibility -- children don't need rhyme or reason, they're ready to believe. My favorite American comic book character was always The Thing -- "THIS MAN, THIS MONSTER!" -- a big guy turned into a pile of rocks by cosmic radiation? Give me a break!

I created HIP FLASK and the ELEPHANTMEN with the intention of filling a series of comic books full of implausible ideas and impossible characters. Evil scientific genius? Check. Human/Animal hybrid hippos, rhinos, crocodiles and elephants? Check. Robotic frog? Check? A cybernetic assassin? Check. Hot girls hanging around misunderstood male leads with deep dark secrets? Check. A controlled time travel experiment with disastrous, far-reaching consequences? Check. Action, Adventure and Really Wild Things? Check, check, CHECK! I was also eager to create a strong, heroic character who, like The Thing, The Hulk, Superman and Spider-man, didn't rely on guns or knives to make his point.

Comics have been taken over by the First-Person-Shooter-Ask-Questions-Later

mentality so prevalent in videogames and movies like The Matrix, but I've always felt that true heroes carry their strength and motivation inside, they don't wave it around in the faces of their ideological opposites threatening to pull the trigger. The heroes of my youth were adventurers and explorers who realized that with great power comes great responsibility – they were all about saving people, not killing them!

I call it **PULP SCIENCE FICTION**, a term which not only covers those great 60s Marvel comics and 70s issues of 2000AD that introduced new ideas and characters every issue, but also DOCTOR WHO, THE AVENGERS TV show, THE TWILIGHT ZONE, STAR TREK and all those great Gerry Anderson TV series and comic strips.

Hopefully, when you picked up this book you didn't know what to expect, and that's the key to science fiction isn't it – the excitement of Not Knowing? I felt that way when I sat down to write the first issue with nothing more than the image of Elephantman Ebony Hide standing on the street in Santa Monica. What kind of character had I created? How would he tell his story? What the heck was he doing outside HOOTERS?! I couldn't wait to find out.

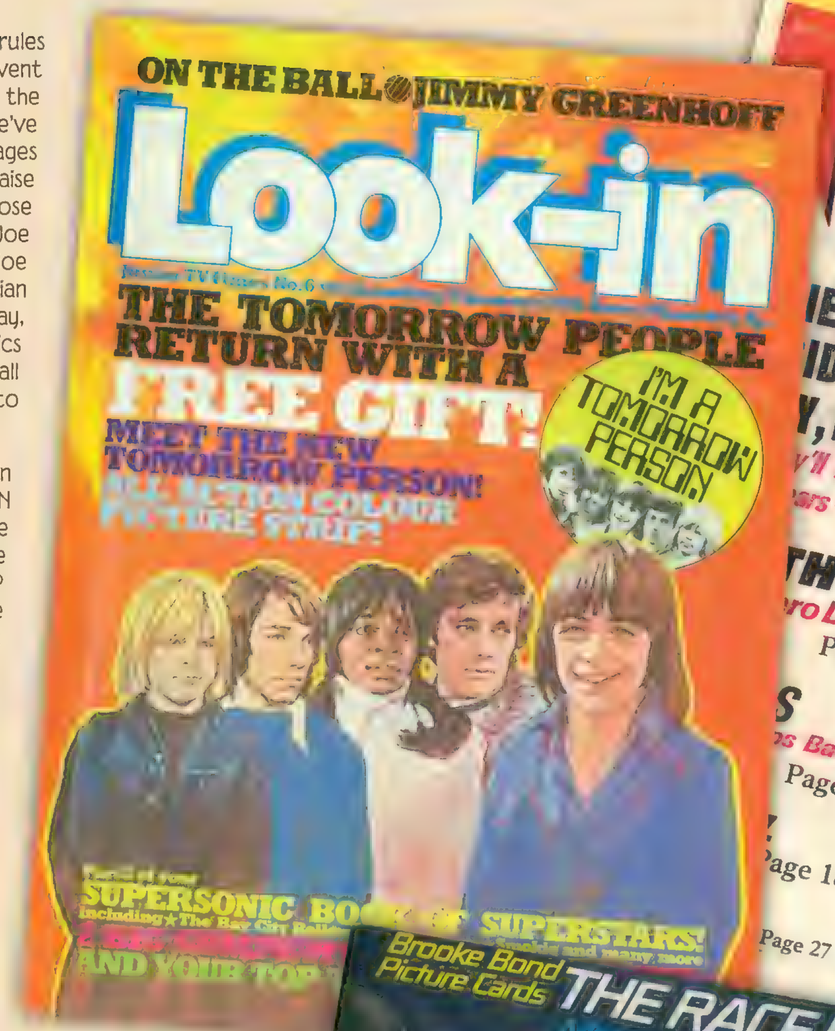
You see, the comics that have excited and engaged me in recent years are invariably the ones that told new stories and broke new ground. It can be fun to work on comics like BATMAN, SPIDER-MAN or THE UNCANNY X-MEN, but inevitably, no matter whether you're a writer or an artist, you're working on those titles as hired hands and you're not only following in somebody else's footsteps, you have no real control over the destinies of those characters – they already have jobs for life. BATMAN has to sell party plates and SPIDER-MAN has to sell Happy Meals.

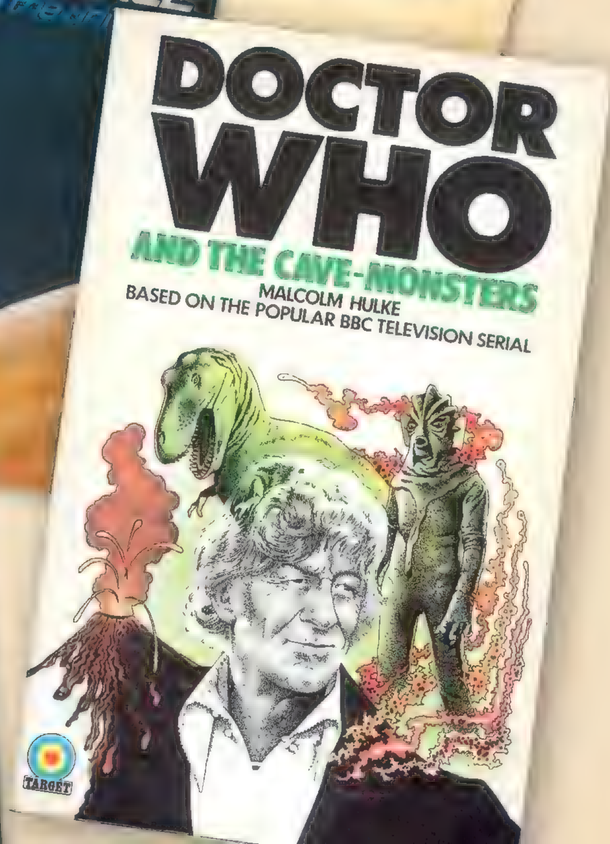
AS LETTERING ARTISTS and graphic designers here in the Comicraft studio, we've had the privilege to contribute to exciting and new creations such as ASTRO CITY, BATTLE CHASERS, DANGER GIRL, STEAMPUNK and THE RED STAR – and those projects have proved to be the most inspiring, challenging and stimulating books we've worked on simply because no one has made rules for us to follow; we had to invent them for ourselves! That's the atmosphere and excitement we've sought to bring to you in the pages of ELEPHANTMEN, and I'd like to raise my hat to the creators of those other books – Kurt Busiek, Joe Madureira, J. Scott Campbell, Joe Kelly, Chris Bachalo and Christian Gossett – for leading the way, and of course to Image Comics for creating the sandbox for all of these titles and creators to play in way back in 1992!

Those of you checking in on the ELEPHANTMEN mythos for the first time should also know that there are three issues of the five issue HIP FLASK series currently available from ACTIVE IMAGES; the first of those three is included in this volume as issue #0, fitting snugly between issues #4 and #5 of ELEPHANTMEN, just as it did when it was originally reissued. We've also collected issues #2 and #3 of the HIP FLASK series in one handsome, oversized Image Comics hardcover entitled HIP FLASK: CONCRETE JUNGLE, ask for it at your Local Comic Book Store! For the artist, Ladrönn, every page has been a labor of love, and he has produced them in the same manner that the artists who worked on COUNTDOWN and strips like THE TRIGAN EMPIRE produced their work in the seventies. He is in total control of each page, and for this reason, every issue takes at least a year to complete, so for all of you who ask, be patient! As I write this revised afterword, in 2010, HIP FLASK #4 is nearing completion and should be available in the first half of 2011! As to where those HIP FLASK issues fit in ELEPHANTMEN continuity, let me say right here that the ELEPHANTMEN ongoing series is, currently, PREQUEL to the story told in CONCRETE JUNGLE, but when the story's done, we'll be following right on...

Meanwhile, our promise to you is that every inch-thick ELEPHANTMEN collection will be 312 pages of Pulp Science Fiction characters, ideas and stories. Look out for Volume #0: ARMED FORCES, featuring all our WAR TOYS stories to date! All in all, ELEPHANTMEN is turning out to be one big long rollercoaster ride. Strap in tight – 'derm isn't all we're packing!

Richard Starkings





PULP SCIENCE FICTION originally appeared in ELEPHANTMEN #1

ENGLISH & MEDIA STUDIES

PART ONE

RICHARD STARKINGS'

BEST OF BRITISH BITS & BOBS

WITHOUT DOUBT, THE FIRST GREAT BRITISH COMIC ARTIST:

FRANK BELLAMY

I've been living in the States nearly two decades, but in many ways I feel more English than ever. Even though we speak the same language, many of my American friends stare at me blankly when I refer to old British comics, illustrators and stories. So, to educate my American friends and readers, I'd like to use these pages as a scrapbook, a personal history, not just of the comics I loved, but also the British movies, TV programmes (only you Yanks call them 'shows') and magazines that have inspired me and my countrymen over the years.

First up has to be Frank Bellamy's work for the best British TV GUIDE, RADIO TIMES. Bellamy is better known for his work in the boys' adventure comic EAGLE – he illustrated HEROS THE SPARTAN (which surely inspired and informed Frank Miller's 300 some thirty years later) FRASER OF AFRICA and some later episodes of DAN DARE. Others love him for his long stint on the newspaper strip GARTH. Nevertheless it was his work in RADIO TIMES that really caught my eye – particularly the DOCTOR WHO cover (shown opposite) he created in 1972. The influence of Bellamy's graphic style and design of this piece can be clearly seen on more than a dozen DOCTOR WHO paperback covers illustrated by Chris Achilleos in the 70's (you can check out Chris's body of work at www.chrisachilleos.co.uk/) and just about every DOCTOR WHO illustration that followed it for the next thirty years. TIMEVIEW, which collects Bellamy's DOCTOR WHO illustrations, can still be found under 'used and new' on Amazon.com and Amazon.co.uk.

THIS PAGE: Bellamy's striking compositions and bold use of graphics turned the three panel GARTH strip into a visual treat. The DAILY MIRROR published two collections of GARTH in the 70's and TITAN BOOKS reissued them in the 80's. Hunt them down and lick every page!

BOOK PALACE have collected Bellamy's early strips from EAGLE... ROBIN HOOD and KING ARTHUR – visit www.bookpalacebooks.com for more information.

Our feature on Frank Bellamy originally appeared in ELEPHANTMEN #4

As you can see from the RADIO TIMES art shown above, Bellamy had a knack for creating striking illustrations that incorporated likenesses effortlessly. He honed his skill, in the pages of EAGLE, in biographical strips that included the stories of British war heroes Winston Churchill and General "Monty" Montgomery both were collected in Dragon's Dream's HIGH COMMAND.

In addition to Bellamy's DAN DARE strips (THE TERRA NOVA TRILOGY and PROJECT NIMBUS), you can also still find collections of his THUNDERBIRDS work. Somehow Bellamy made Gerry Anderson's puppets look like people without losing the essential charm of the TV series.

NEXT: DON LAWRENCE & The TRIGAN EMPIRE!

ENGLISH & MEDIA STUDIES

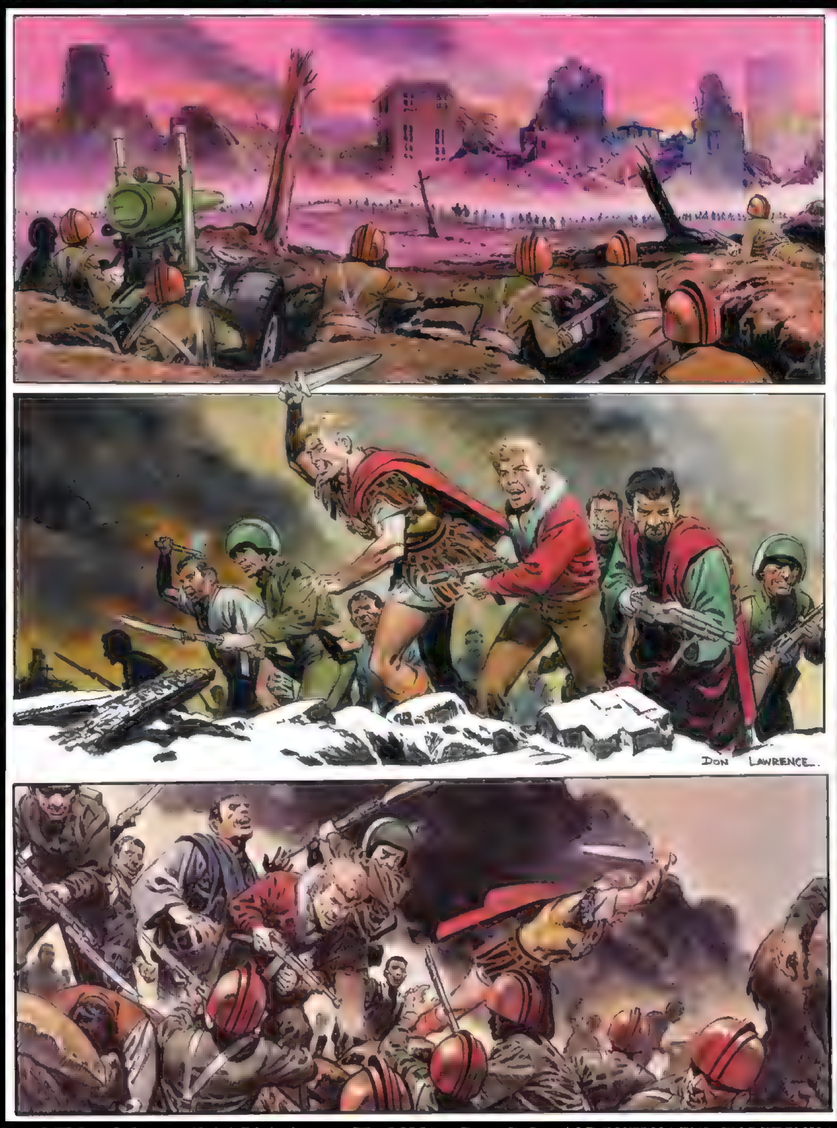
RICHARD STARKINGS' BEST OF BRITISH BITS & BOBS

PART TWO

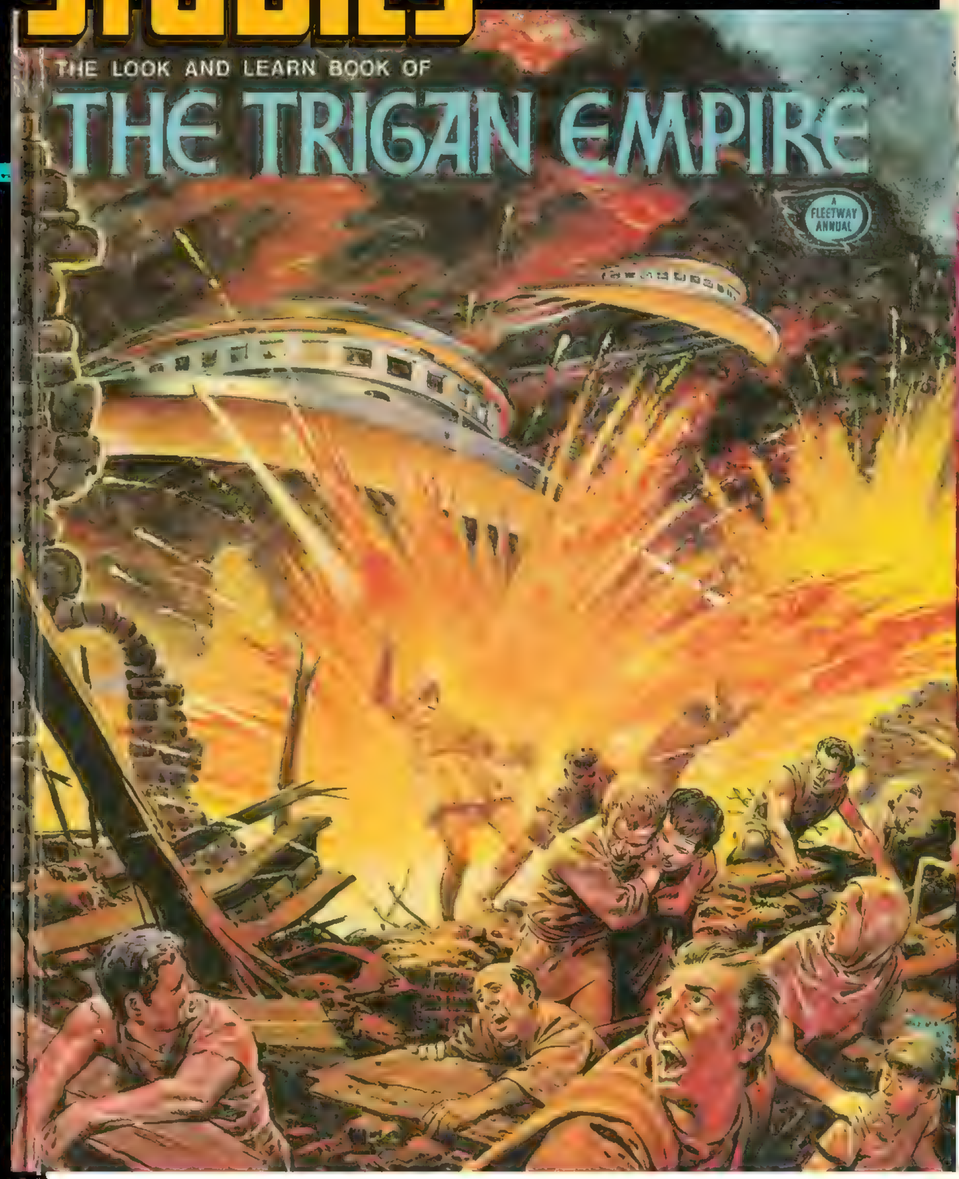
DON LAWRENCE

If you were a British schoolboy in the 70s, chances are you read THE FALL & RISE OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE written by Michael Butterworth and painted in sumptious full colour by the brilliant Don Lawrence. Although the strip began its life in a 60s paper called RANGER, I discovered the strip in LOOK AND LEARN, a magazine which ran two pages "Every Monday." At my grammar (high) school LOOK AND LEARN was the only magazine with comics available in the library.

Set on the planet Elekton, the strip centered on the adventures of Emperor Trigo, Peric, his scientist and advisor, Trigo's brother, Brag and Brag's son, Janno.



Above: Empires and World Wars collide! THE TRIGAN EMPIRE was a schoolboy's paradise -- no girls allowed (or featured in stories)!



Right: Youth, Wisdom and Authority: Janno, Peric and Trigo

The epic breadth and scope of THE TRIGAN EMPIRE strip was staggering. Tri-planes, spaceships, jet fighters and dragons flew in the same skies; fierce battles were fought with both swords and sub-machine guns and Trigo's soldiers were just as comfortable on horseback as they were in a futuristic tank or behind the wheel of super-sleek hovercars. Giants tossed boulders at our heroes while miniature assassins stalked them at night. Villains travelled through time or transformed themselves into water and all the while the abuse of science weighed heavily on the conscience of Peric, Trigo's wise old friend, a character Lawrence eventually grew to resemble.

LOOK AND LEARN

Not a comic but a "paper", LOOK AND LEARN was "a treasure house of exciting articles, stories and pictures to delight and inspire the imaginations of its young readers." Note that the masthead depicts a girl reading and a boy playing with a toy plane.

Boys Looked, Girls Learned!

LOOK AND LEARN was the size of the old US magazine LIFE and came with the full approval of parents everywhere... so kids were justifiably cautious, especially when less successful publications like THE BIBLE STORY and THE CHILDREN'S NEWSPAPER were merged into it. But the gorgeous artwork featured in its pages easily won me over. The piece on the left here is from THE STORY OF WORLD WAR I illustrated by Frank Bellamy, now available in a paperback collection from BOOK PALACE. Illustrations by artists such as Michael Noble and Ron Embleton, who would later work alongside Bellamy on TV21, were also regularly featured.

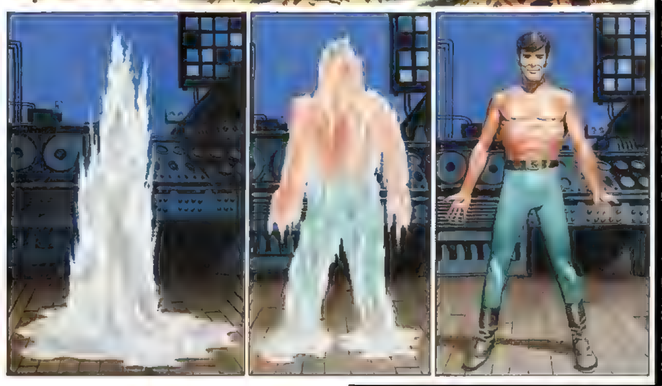
learn more @ www.lookandlearn.com!

Our feature on Don Lawrence originally appeared in ELEPHANTMEN #5

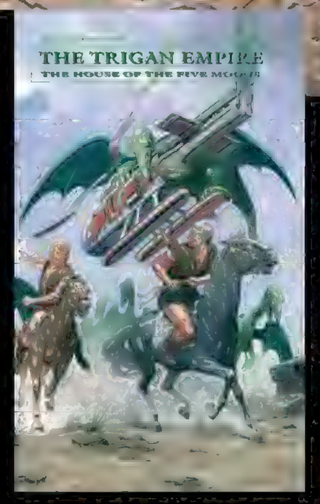
Friends quickly became enemies on Elekton, as old and young men challenged the rule of Trigo's royal family. Lawrence & Butterworth created a rich world in which you accepted green-skinned allies and blue-skinned foes as readily as you accepted the Roman regalia and the strange prehistoric beasts.

DON LAWRENCE.

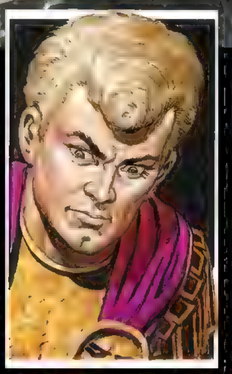
Although Lawrence's contemporaries in LOOK AND LEARN also contributed art of incredibly high quality, no other artist from the paper produced quite such a creative and substantial body of work. When Lawrence became unhappy with his compensation on EMPIRE, he left the strip after ten years and created another successful series, STORM.



While science created super-heroes in US comic books, in Trigo's empire it only seemed to create misery and villainy, much to the despair of Peric. Left, Janno's friend Vella becomes Hydro Man, middle left, Trigo's brother Brag succumbs to the Trigan Empire's version of an iPod.



I'm endebted to Chris Weston, who worked with Lawrence, and Rob van Bavel of the Don Lawrence Collection for supplying scans of original artwork for this feature. Lovingly restored, twelve hardcover editions of THE TRIGAN EMPIRE are still available from him at www.donlawrence.co.uk – they're expensive but so gorgeous you'll want to (wait for it, wait for it) *lick every page!*



NEXT: MICHAEL NOBLE & TV21!

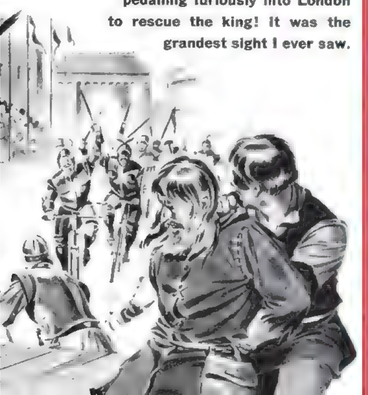
ENGLISH & MEDIA STUDIES — M. NOBLE — AND...

PART THREE

RICHARD STARKINGS' VERY BEST OF BRITISH BITS & BOBS

If you were paying attention during the last E&MS (yes, you at the back there!) you'll recall my mentioning LOOK AND LEARN, which featured the work of a number of talented artists who cut their teeth providing spot illustrations for the paper before moving on to greater fame on comic strips. In fact, one got the feeling that these artists were offered work on comic strip series not because they harboured a burning ambition to create comics but because they were clearly accomplished craftsmen who could draw pretty much anything. Michael Noble was an artist of an incredibly high calibre who was just as much at home drawing tanks, African tribes, knights on horseback – the illustrations on the left here are from a story on Cecil Rhodes and an adaptation of Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in the Court of King Arthur* – or spaceships and alien monsters.

Five hundred of them, in full armour, pedalling furiously into London to rescue the king! It was the grandest sight I ever saw.



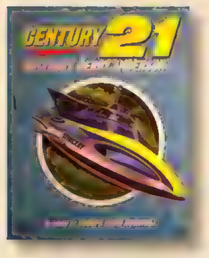
Our feature on Michael Noble originally appeared in ELEPHANTMEN #6

TV21 CENTURY

Right: I must confess to having never watched a single episode of the FIREBALL XL5 TV show, despite having bought the DVDs -- how could they possibly live up to the comic strips? Mind you, disc 5 features a terrific interview with Michael Noble from which the photo on the page opposite is, um, borrowed. Rush to Amazon.com and buy the DVD set so that the documentary makers quickly forgive me!

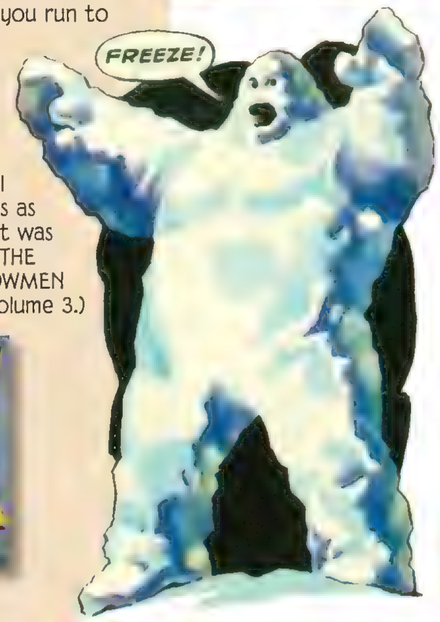
Although Noble also illustrated episodes of STAR TREK and CAPTAIN SCARLET for TV21, I remember him best for his work on FIREBALL XL5 and ZERO X. Unlike Bellamy and Lawrence, it's difficult to single out particular images from Noble's work that point to his strengths, you really have to look at his pages exactly as they were published. Although Frank Bellamy's double page spreads in EAGLE and TV21 might be considered more dynamic and exciting, Noble's clear but vibrant colours made the stories both eye-catching and easy to follow. His figurework and polish may not have been as solid and seductive as Don Lawrence (who also illustrated the XL5 strip, albeit briefly), but even in the most mundane sequences his characters were always acting or reacting – they seemed to move on the page in front of you. Noble also never shied away from creating intricate establishing shots of spaceports or alien worlds that would make CGI artists blush. Working from scripts written by writer/editor Alan Fennell, Noble brought FIREBALL XL5 to life in a way that the TV series never could, not because it was another of Gerry Anderson's puppet shows, but because it was filmed in black and white whereas the comic strip was always rendered in full colour.

Noble's work on FIREBALL XL5 TV strips was clearly influenced by the pulp science fiction stories, movies and illustrations of the 50s, and if you run to your local online bookstore right now and pick up Chris Bentley's series of lovingly restored TV21 comic strips, you'll see Noble's work is as vibrant today as it was forty years ago! (THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMEN can be found in Volume 3.)



Above: Lawrence's XL5

Above & Below: Noble's STAR TREK



Report and pictures by LASER-ACCELERATED SPECTRO-VIEW.

FIREBALL XL5

Fireball XL5 is escorting a supply ship back to Earth from Planet Syntex. The supply ship's cargo—almanac on the brink of insanity. Fireball's cargo—a mysterious membrane. Left behind on Syntex—a dead man, his spacesuit and back lacerated. On planet GK5 two astronomers, Frank Rose and Ken Mead, sight a shower of meteorites. From one of the meteorites an object is released . . .

THE OBJECT . . . ANOTHER MYSTERIOUS MEMBRANE . . .

DETECTING EQUIPMENT

CARRERA, PRONTO!

IT'S GIANT!

A LIQUID FILLED SAC CARRYING WHAT?

SUDDENLY KEN KNOWS IT IS THERE BEHIND THEM

FRANK . . . IT'S . . . IT'S . . . NO ! NOW !

SICKENING FEAR GRIPS THE TWO MEN AS THEY RUN FOR THE IR LIVES . . .

BUT

ROUTINE REPORTS FROM TRACKING STATIONS STATE "ALL CONTACT LOST WITH GK5. SPACE CITY CONTACTS FIXS BALL XL5."

"JET BACK HERE, ZOOM IN AND FIND SOMETHING HAPPENING OUT THERE AND I WANT TO KNOW WHAT!"

OKAY, COMMANDER!

FRANK ROSE AND KEN MEAD DIE THAT DAY ON GK5.

FIREBALL LANDS AT SPACE CITY AND IMMEDIATELY THE CREW REPORT . . AND LEARNS OF A THIRD VICTIM

THINGS ARE GETTING TOUGH, DO YOU HAVE A VIEWING ITEM?

YES, STEVE! PART ONE, THE STUMBLING BLOCK, YOU REMEMBER, TOM'S LIQUID DESCRIBED THE TRANCE OF DIAMONDS. THESE, ITS CRYSTALLINE CONSTITUTION IS UNKNOWN TO US. EVERYTHING ABOUT IT IS ALIEN, STEVE !

SYNTEX, GAS AND THE NEXT TO GO CHUCHAU. IT IS AN EPIDEMIC.

A CHEMICAL MASSACRE, CAUSE A GOAL? OBSERVATORY AND A SURVEY UNIT. WONDER IF THE CONNECTION'S

Above & Below: Sure, Yondu's still going from on the conquest of planet Earth — what's NOT to love?

FIREBALL XL5

After Space City loses contact with five planets, Fireball is sent to investigate and encounters a shower of meteorites. A full scale space attack is launched. Then a membrane released from one of the meteorites lands at Cape Apollo near Space City. Surrounded by armoured units the membrane splits open . . .

AND REVEALS

WHAT'S IT'S NEXT MOVE ?

IT'S HORRIBLE HORRIBLE !

SUDDENLY THE CREATURE LASHES OUT. THE TENTACLES FIND THEIR VICTIMS!

RETALIATION IS IMMEDIATE . .

FIRE!

WHAT . . LOOK! IT'S STARTING TO TAKE ROOT!

WITHIN MINUTES THE ALIEN DOUBLES IN SIZE

OUR ARTILLERY MUST TAKE EFFECT, QUICK !

MORE OF THEM ! IT'S TURNING INTO A FULL SCALE ATTACK !

SUDDENLY THE DEMANDING BUZZ OF A VIDESCREEN RINGS. ZERO HURRYING TO A MOVERCAR

THE PRESIDENT IS CALLING. A "TOP SECURITY CONFERENCE IN TEN MINUTES, COMMANDER ZERO ! WILL YOU DEVISE WAYS YOUR REPORT READY!"

OF COURSE

Opposite, Top: ZERO X was a THUNDERBIRDS spinoff which came to vivid life in Noble's capable hands. There's not enough space here to do the series justice but this spread is one of my favourites and, like XL5, was also reprinted in COUNTDOWN.

ZERO X

Landed on Mars after a forced touchdown resulting from a dust storm, the crew of the Zero-X M.E.V. clean off the clinging Mars dust. Fearing the Red Planet's fire-breathing rock snakes, Paul Travers takes no chances — but suddenly Carlson's scientific curiosity gets the better of him . . .

WHAT ? GOOD GRIEF ! THE IDIOT'S GOING FOR A CLOSER LOOK AT THE ROCK SNAKES !

THE WEIRD LIFE-FORMS THAT INHABIT THE MOUNTAIN REGIONS OF MARS ARE WATCHFUL . .

CARLSON ! COME BACK ! THOSE THINGS ARE DEADLY DANGEROUS !

FASCINATING ! LIVING CREATURES MADE OF ACTUAL ROCK ! IF I COULD FIND OUT THEIR INTELLIGENCE LEVEL

SUDDENLY

AAAGH !

DON'T PANIC, CARLSON ! DON'T PANIC !

I'M ON FIRE ! HELP ME ! HELP ME !

AMIDST A HOLOCAUST OF HURTLING FLAME, PAUL TRAVERS GRAPPLES WITH THE FEAR-CRAZED MAN.

FOR PETE'S SAKE ! IF I CAN'T GET HIM TO THE M.E.V. BEFORE HE'S BURN IN THESE PRESSURE SUITS IT'S CURTAINS !

© 1972 Century 21 M. Ltd.

GET THAT AIRLOCK OPEN, DOPEY ! IT'S GONNA BE TOUCH AND GO !

IN THE VERY NICK OF TIME, PAUL BUNDLES THE FEAR-CRAZED SCIENTIST TO SAFETY . .

I SHOULD HAVE YOU JAILED FOR THIS WHEN WE GET BACK TO EARTH, CARLSON ! YOU DELIBERATELY UNREELED THIS WHOLE EXPEDITION !

AND THE DANGER ISN'T OVER YET. THE ROCK SNAKES TURN THEIR FIRE ON THE M.E.V. .

WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE FAST !

YEAH . AND WE'RE STILL WITHOUT A RADIO LINK WITH ZERO-X !

WHAT IF WE CAN'T GET THROUGH TO THE MOTHER SHIP IN TIME, PAUL ?

BRAD'S GOT HIS STANDING ORDERS . TWELVE HOURS WITHOUT WORD FROM US . AND HE HAS TO TAKE ZERO-X HOME !

MEANWHILE . IN ORBIT FAR ABOVE THE RED PLANET

EARTH CONTROL CALLING ZERO-X . ANY NEWS OF THAT M.E.V YET ?

NEGATIVE ! AND NINE HOURS HAVE GONE BY ! I JUST CAN'T RAISE THEM AT ALL !

I'M SORRY, BRAD . THIS IS GOING TO BE HARD FOR YOU TO TAKE, BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO BE PREPARED TO ABANDON THE M.E.V. !

YEAH ! I - I KNOW

THE HOURS TICK RELENTLESSLY AWAY, AND SPACE NAVIGATOR BRAD NEWMAN WRESTLES WITH HIS CONSCIENCE . .

SUPPOSE I DISOBEYED ORDERS, TOOK THE SHIP DOWN TO MARS . BUT NO ! I CAN'T, THERE ISN'T THE FUEL TO TAKE OFF AGAIN !

AND THEN THE FINAL DEADLINE IS REACHED .

ZERO-X, THIS IS EARTH CONTROL. SET COURSE AND FIRE PRIMARY ROCKETS !

THIS IS ZERO-X . ROGER !

SICK INSIDE, BRAD SETS THE CONTROLS FOR ABANDONMENT PROCEDURE

WHY DID IT HAVE TO END UP LIKE THIS ? PAUL . THOSE POOR GUYS . THEY COULDN'T HAVE SURVIVED . HOW COULD THERE BE ANY EXPLANATION FOR A TWELVE HOUR RADIO SILENCE ?

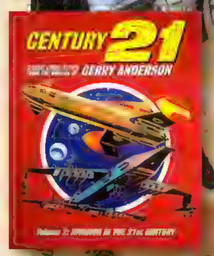
AND FAR BELOW

WE'LL PULL UP HERE . IT LOOKS CLEAR ENOUGH TO HAVE ANOTHER GO AT THE RADIO ANTENNAE !

YEAH, PAUL . BUT TIME'S ALREADY RUN OUT ! IF BRAD'S KEPT TO STRICT SCHEDULE, WE'RE GONERS !

Is the crew doomed on Mars ? See next week's story !

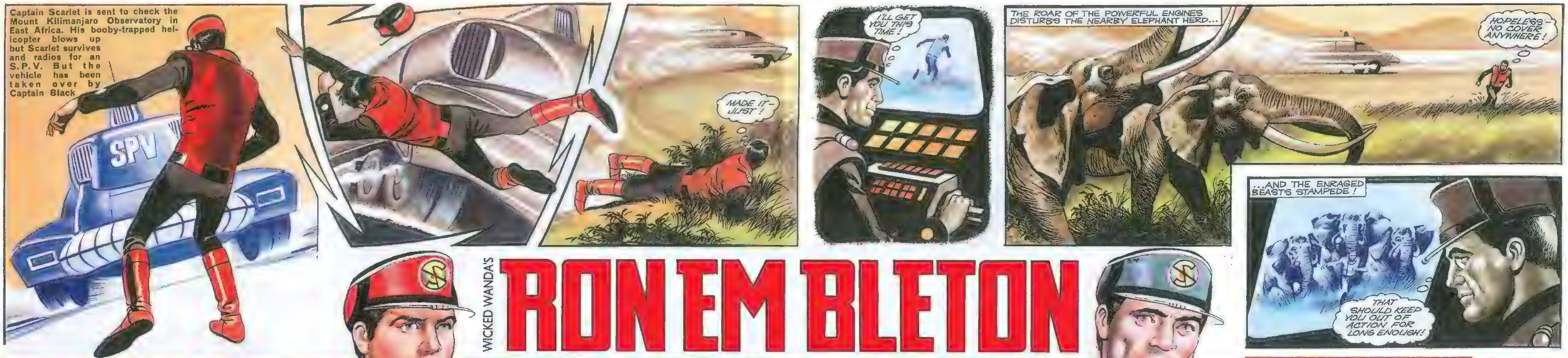
This illustration of Captain Blue was painted in the early 90s to cover reprints of the TV21 CAPTAIN SCARLET strips which he occasionally drew in the 60s, as shown on the right. In the 70s and 80s he became best known for strips such as SPACE 1999 in the pages of LOOK-IN.



There are lots more reprints of Noble's work in the CENTURY 21 series, including the ZERO X story "Prisoners of the Eyeleaves" (far right)!

NEXT: RON EMBLETON & CAPTAIN SCARLET!

CAPTAIN SCARLET IS INDESTRUCTIBLE! YOU ARE NOT! DO NOT TRY TO EMULATE HIM!



WICKED WANDA'S

RON EMBLETON

ENGLISH & MEDIA STUDIES

CAPTAIN SCARLET— Spectrum Agent

PART FOUR

THE STORY SO FAR: if you were a British comic artist in the 60's or 70's, most likely you cut your teeth on spot illos for LOOK AND LEARN and moved on to strips based on one of the many Gerry Anderson TV shows for TV21. In that regard, RON S. EMBLETON was perhaps the most prolific and accomplished illustrator of all...

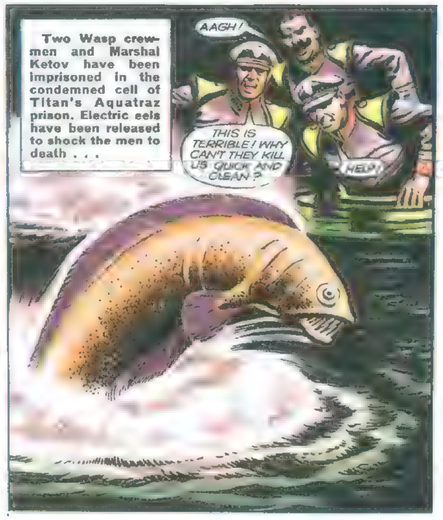
Yes, Both FRANK BELLAMY and MICHAEL NOBLE drew CAPTAIN SCARLET for TV21 but Embleton's strips were regarded as definitive... maybe because he created the gorgeous Scarlet-in-jeopardy artwork for the TV show's Episode Cards, seen here.

EMBLETON effortlessly combined the color and drama of Noble with the majesty and classical anatomy of Lawrence, yet perfected a style that was very clearly his own.

Whether he was painting Prairie Indians, Plunderers or Pirates, Embleton's work had an immediacy and vibrancy that seemed to shimmer with historical accuracy. And, man, could he draw horses!

Point your browser at LOOKANDLEARN.COM and you'll find an amazing archive of Embleton's fantastic paintings.

Our feature on Ron Embleton originally appeared in ELEPHANTMEN #9



Left: Embleton's work on Gerry & Sylvia Anderson's Supermarionation strip for TV21 set him apart from any other artist who tackled the strip. No other artist could compete with Embleton's meticulous attention to detail and dramatic realism. Right: When Don Lawrence left the work-for-hire world of LOOK AND LEARN to create STORM in Holland, other artists were handed THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, but only Embleton came close to recreating the energy and rich atmosphere achieved by Lawrence.

Collections of Embleton's CAPTAIN SCARLET and STINGRAY are also available in the CENTURY 21 books – get 'em on Amazon.com or Amazon.co.uk!

Embleton not only illustrated historical text for LOOK AND LEARN, he also researched and wrote many pieces. After more than ten years contributing covers, articles and sumptious spot illos, his work was often found on the back cover where he told the tales of TANNHAUSER, Knight of Song, TRISTAN & ISOLDE and THE RING OF THE NIBELUNG. Embleton's striking use of colour to create different moods was masterful and always caught the eye. Unfortunately, the quality of the printing couldn't always match the quality of Embleton's subtle art. Images were screened in a manner that made the work seem fuzzy and often printed out of register. Compare the pieces shown here and you'll see what I mean.

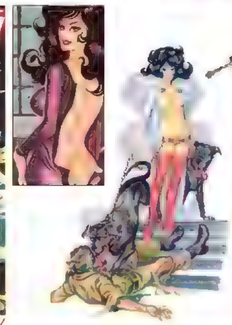
Original Art..

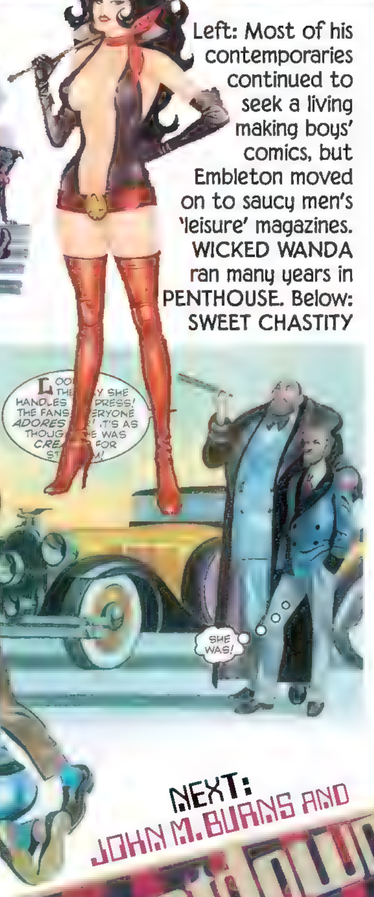
Printed Art..

Below: Although he won't be remembered in 2000AD, Embleton did the cover for STARLORD, which later merged with 2000AD.

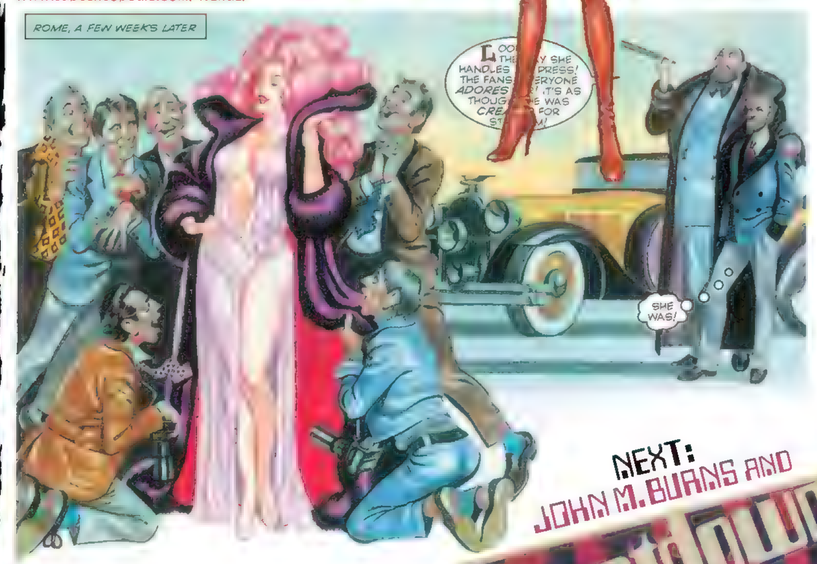
As LOOK AND LEARN got thinner and smaller and started reprinting old artwork, it became clear that the era of the wholesome children's magazine was over.

www.subtextopedia.com/Wanda/





Left: Most of his contemporaries continued to seek a living making boys' comics, but Embleton moved on to saucy men's 'leisure' magazines. WICKED WANDA ran many years in PENTHOUSE. Below: SWEET CHASTITY



NEXT: JOHN M. BURNS AND Countdown

John Burns

ENGLISH & MEDIA STUDIES

THE STORY SO FAR: If you've been paying attention during this brief history of the British comics that inspired me in the ⇒ahem⇐ 60s and 70s, you'll remember that the title that got me hooked into comics for good was COUNTDOWN, heir apparent to TV21, home to the artists featured earlier – Bellamy, Embleton and Noble. Their incredible TV21 work was often reprinted in the pages of COUNTDOWN, but now there were some amazing new illustrators bringing to life my favourite TV shows – artists whose names were now featured prominently on the pages they illustrated – Gerry Heylock on UFO and Harry Lindfield on DOCTOR WHO... and John M. Burns on COUNTDOW – Hey, wait one minute, who ever heard of a TV show called COUNTDOWN... what the heck is this? "Spacecraft Designs from the MGM film 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY?" Never heard of it! Why are they wasting color pages on something you can't see on the telly and running CAPTAIN SCARLET in black and white?!

Yes, I'm ashamed to say that reading the beautiful COUNTDOWN strip was hard work for me when I was a nipper – the drawings were great, but how come people's bodies disappeared into amorphous orange masses? How come the spaceship was steel one moment and green the next? Didn't the artist know REAL colours?!

Above: When I saw John Hurt waking up from suspended animation in ALIEN, some eight years later, I was immediately reminded of the COUNTDOWN sequence shown above. I'm guessing Ridley Scott would have had a better appreciation of Burns' artistry than I did at the time!

I read every episode of COUNTDOWN, because I loved reading comics. But I hated it, not just because I had no sense of light and colour, but because the featured alien you see on this page, "Bill," quite simply freaked me out.

I now realize that Burns was a master of using light for dramatic effect – he often incorporated the white of the paper to create stark lighting on the faces and costumes of the characters... but, back in the day, Burns' vivid colours and contrasts didn't fit my "Flowers-are-red" view of the world. When whole figures or faces were held in a single colour, perhaps orange or green, I often had to put the comic away and find somewhere soft and warm where I could lie down.

Our feature on John M. Burns originally appeared in ELEPHANTMEN: WAR TOYS #1

ISSUE No. 22 Week ending July 17, 1971

countdown

The Space-age comic!

Safely back aboard the starship, the Countdown crew, together with the alien 'Bill' and George Barnes, the old moon prospector, work on new schemes to free the Earth from William Costra. But the evil Earth Controller has linked the beginning of his problems with the return of Countdown and has ordered a survey ship to find proof of its destruction . . .

EARTH STATION M17, PART OF A RING OF 24 SATELLITES OPERATING IN THE MARS ORBIT. AT THIS MOMENT THE CREW'S NORMAL ROUTINE IS BROKEN . . .

EARTH CONTROLLER WILLIAM COSTRA READS OUT HIS DIRECTIVE...

YOUR MISSION IS SECRET AND OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE.

I WANT THE ASTEROID BELT GLEANED UNTIL YOU GIVE ME THE ANSWER. DOES COUNTDOWN EXIST OR WAS IT DESTROYED?

LESS THAN AN HOUR LATER...

IT'S GOING TO BE LIKE LOOKING FOR A NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK.

NEVERTHELESS, SUCCESS WILL BRING US PROMOTION, HENDERSON. BIG PROMOTION.

MEANWHILE, ON COUNTDOWN, DEEP AMONGST THE ASTEROIDS AND OBLIVIOUS OF THE NEW DANGER THAT FACES THEM, ACTIVITY IS HIGH...

HOW'S IT GOING, BILL?

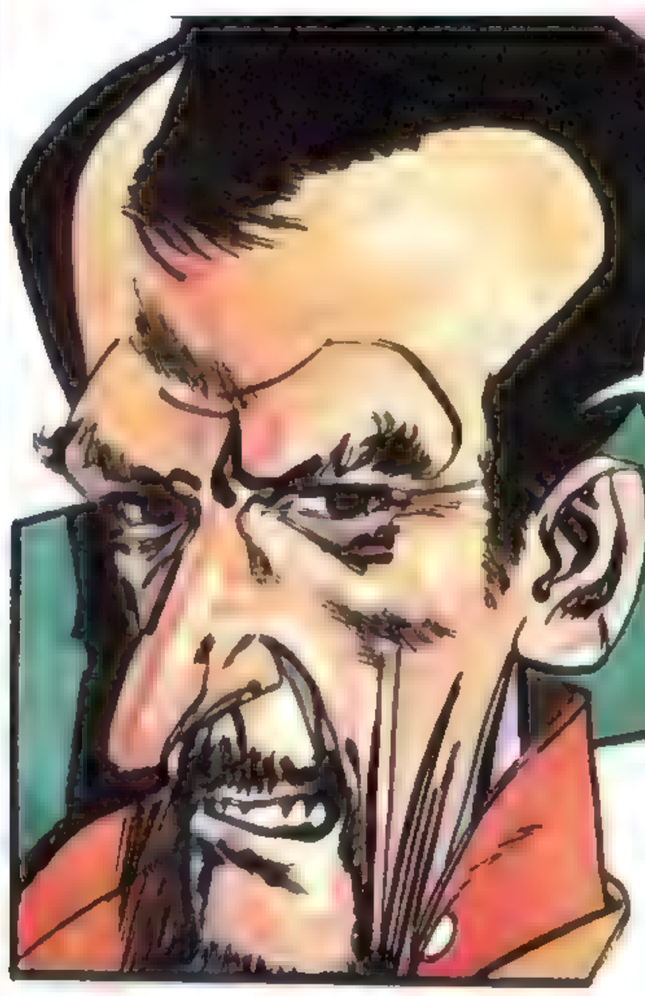
A FEW MORE DAYS, MARC, AND WE SHALL BE READY FOR OUR MOON ENTERPRISE.

THE MULTIPLE TRANSPORTER IS READY. EACH MEMBER OF THE CREW NOW HAS A WHISPER WHEEL.

WHAT ABOUT THIS FANCY FORCE FIELD DEVICE YOU'VE BEEN WORKING ON?

Turn to back page

As is so often the case in comic books, the most interesting character in COUNTDOWN was the villain... Earth Controller William Johannes Costra. As the strip progressed, Costra's features became more angular and pronounced -- his jaw longer, his nose bigger and his ears more rubbery... he was clearly the character that Burns enjoyed drawing the most... but, John, John, help a young boy out here...what colour was his skin? Green? Orange? Pink? Pink AND orange?!?! MUMMY!



Long before John BYRNE was using floating heads in X-MEN and FANTASTIC FOUR, John BURNS' perfected this simple, striking graphic technique in the COUNTDOWN strip... But... where were their bodies?! And, on the right here, is that a floating head bathed in a strange green amorphous mass...?! My blue blanket... where is my blue blanket?!

With issue #59, COUNTDOWN comic became TV ACTION and the titular strip came to an end after 138 pages* in issue #70. Burns moved onto other strips, including UFO and MISSION IMPOSSIBLE in TV ACTION and then THE TOMORROW PEOPLE and BIONIC WOMAN in LOOK-IN. More on those soon... meantime, you can still find Burns in 2000AD on NIKOLAI DANTE and JUDGE DREDD.

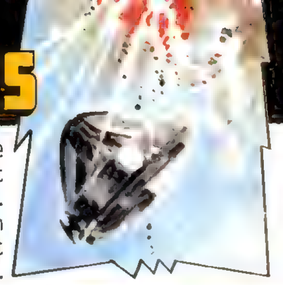
*And yet to be collected!

NEXT: GERRY HAYLOCK'S *UFO*

ENGLISH & MEDIA STUDIES

PART SIX

Mike Noble's XL5 and John M. Burns COUNTDOWN were fantastic, however it was the work of another artist that I looked forward to most in COUNTDOWN. Unbeknownst to my 9 year old eyes, I was already familiar with his art – on LAND OF THE GIANTS in the JOE 90 comic – but now he had my full attention and in this chapter we look at...



Gerry Haylock's

UFO

ART: GERRY HAYLOCK
© 1971 CENTURY 21 M. LTD.

While one UFO is damaging Moonbase's detecting systems, another Alien craft lands on the Moon. Astronaut Frank Harris, suspected of being past his best, is knocked out by the Alien pilot's ray gun. Recovering, Harris realises he has to warn Moonbase of the visitor's arrival, but his interceptor crashes . . .

I CAN'T GO ON. I'LL NEVER MAKE IT!

GRAVELY INJURED, WITH HIS OXYGEN SUPPLY CLOSE TO ZERO, HARRIS STUMBLES TWO MORE PACES... THEN

AT THE SAME MOMENT, THE ALIEN WAS COMPLETING HIS MISSION. THE SECOND OF TWO ELECTRONIC DEVICES TWENTY MILES FROM MOONBASE... WAS NOW BLEEPING THROUGH SPACE.

MEANWHILE, PAUL FOSTER WAS CONTINUING HIS SEARCH FOR THE MISSING HARRIS...

MOONBUG 1 TO COMMANDER STRAKER... I THINK I'VE FOUND HIM... BUT I COULD BE TOO LATE!

GET HIM BACK TO BASE AS FAST AS YOU CAN, PAUL!...

WASTING NO TIME, FOSTER LEAVES MOONBUG...

HE'S ALIVE! COME ON, HARRIS... YOU'LL SOON BE SAFE IN THE MOONBUG SICKBAY

AN HOUR LATER...

WHAT'S THE SCORE, DOCTOR?

NO! GOOD, SIR. HE'S COMPLETELY EXHAUSTED... AND HIS BREATHING'S STILL WEAK.

BUT THE BURNING KNOWLEDGE IN HARRIS'S BRAIN FIGHTS THROUGH OBLIVION...

COULD BE DELIRIOUS, SIR?

COMMANDER STRAKER! ALIEN... ON MOON! INTERCEPTOR CRASHED...

WE HAVE TO CHECK IT OUT, PAUL. LAUNCH INTERCEPTORS... IF THERE'S AN ALIEN LOOSE, I WANT HIM FOUND!

BUT THE ALIEN HAS RETURNED TO HIS SHIP...

...AND SECONDS LATER...

I WANTED THAT ALIEN ALIVE! HE WAS HERE FOR SOME PURPOSE. BUT WHAT?

AS THE UFO GAINS SPEED, THE INTERCEPTORS SWEEP IN...

INTERCEPTOR 1 TO BASE. YOUR RADAR SIGHTING WAS CORRECT...

THE COMMANDER HAS NOT LONG TO WAIT FOR AN ANSWER...

THEN...

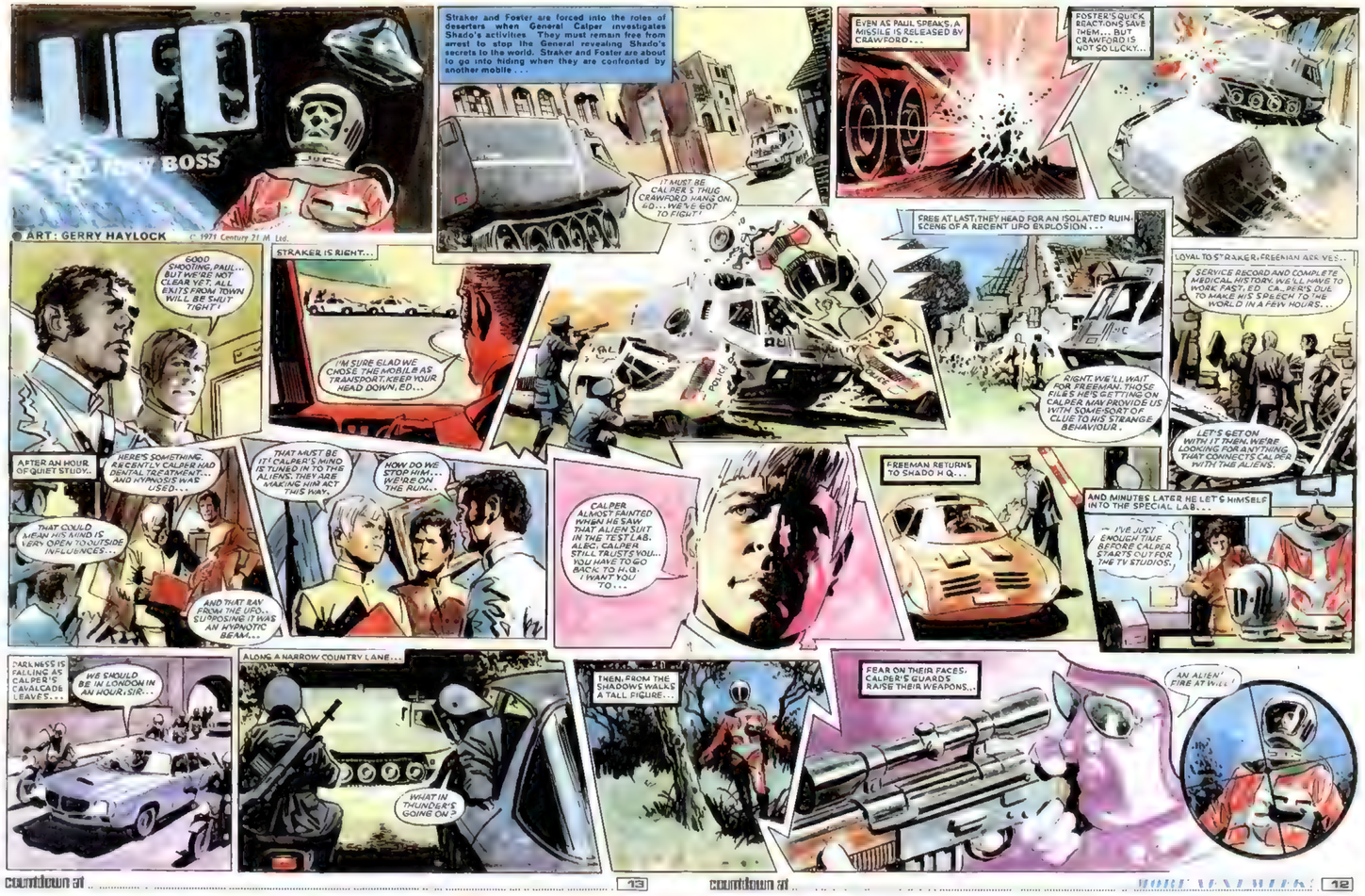
THE ALIEN MISSILE FINDS ITS MARK...

THE SKIN HAS BEEN PUNCTURED... WE'RE LOSING AIR FAST. THE PLACE WILL EXPLODE.

QUICKLY! THROUGH THE AIR LOCK. WE MUST SEAL OFF THIS DAMAGED SECTION!

NOW WE KNOW! THEY'VE PIN-POINTED MOONBASE'S POSITION... AND WITH SID OUT OF ACTION, WE'RE SITTING DUCKS!

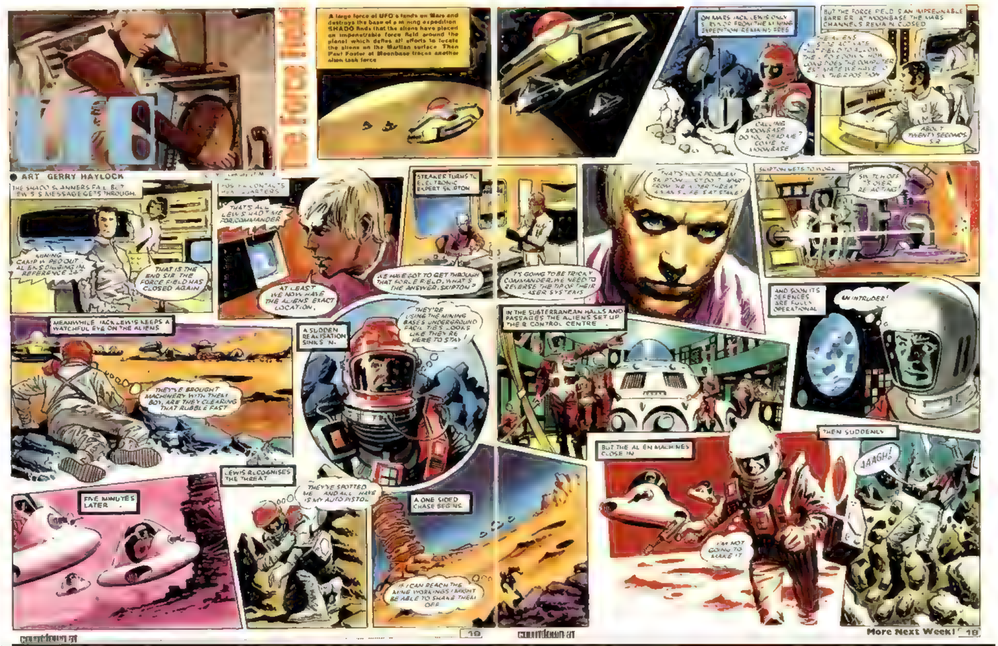
Our feature on Gerry Haylock originally appeared in ELEPHANTMEN: WAR TOYS #2



Even though Haylock's stunning double page spreads were clearly inspired by the work of Frank Bellamy on HEROS THE SPARTAN and THUNDERBIRDS, as well as other artists in COUNTDOWN – check out the John Burns style dramatic lighting in the pages shown on the right and left here – Haylock's work scored over the others in my young opinion because it seemed utterly authentic.

Characters in the UFO strip looked exactly like their TV counterparts, and all the vehicles and spaceships had clearly been sourced from photographs. Faced with the limitations of illustrating a strip based on a TV show, many artists spend all their energy labouring over stiff and awkward likenesses of the show's stars... Haylock seemed to incorporate actor's 'performances' in his work effortlessly, even as the story rattled along at a brisk pace.

Continued on back page!



Since my parents disapproved of shows on ITV – England's only commercial channel at the time – I was only able to watch episodes of UFO on TV on our crummy 12" portable black and white TV set... so perhaps the most appealing aspect of the UFO strip was the fact that COUNTDOWN made it available to me in glorious technicolour. When I was finally able to watch the series on videotape, I also realized that the comic strips more fully explored the potential of the UFO format. The show seemed to concentrate an inordinate amount of time showing characters standing around smoking, drinking whiskey and having 'relationships,' whereas the strip was all about action and stretching the concept as far as possible. On TV, the UFO aliens – a dying race who came to steal human organs to replace their own – were silent, but in the strip they became characters in their own right, interacting with the series regulars and drawing our sympathy and understanding. Better yet, in INVASION FROM MARS, Haylock created new, bigger UFOs and individual alien hovercrafts. Yes – the aliens were INVADING! And FROM MARS!

FROM FRONT COVER

ISSUE No. 33 Week ending October 2, 1971

countdown

The Space Age Comic! 5p

GERRY ANDERSON'S

UFO

THE SNATCH

● ART: GERRY HAYLOCK © 1971 Century 21 M. Ltd.

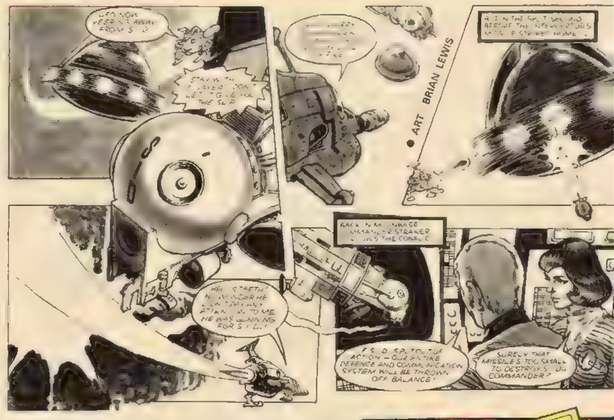
Turn to back page

However, UFO's aliens were not native to Mars, and the show itself never showed us where they did come from... but Haylock's colour swansong on UFO, a story entitled "The Snatch," promised to take us there... As you can see in the strip shown here, SHADO's Paul Foster is kidnapped by the aliens in a strange looking UFO that looks like it took a wrong turn after appearing in THE DALEK INVASION OF EARTH... and ultimately, encased in one of the aliens' cool red-and-silver spacesuits, Foster arrived on their planet, on the edge of the galaxy, and then... HORROR! Gerry Haylock was inexplicably replaced as artist on the story's concluding installments by Jon Davis, a capable enough artist, but-but... it was just WRONG!

Haylock had been working on UFO for over six months straight, so I'm quite sure that he must have either fallen sick or taken a well-deserved holiday... however, this was the end of an era as, after he illustrated a lacklustre black and white story that followed the end of "The Snatch," he never returned to UFO again.

countdown RESUMES NEXT WEEK! TO BE CONTINUED!

Happily for me, Haylock moved on to my other COUNTDOWN favourite, the DOCTOR WHO strip. Up-and-coming talents such as Brian Lewis and Martin Asbury had brief stints on UFO before John Burns became the regular artist following the end of the COUNTDOWN strip. If you look at the panels on the bottom right you can see the space station from 2001 that was featured in COUNTDOWN and Burns' trademark green and orange lighting and bright white teeth. However, it wasn't long before UFO disappeared from British comics altogether when COUNTDOWN, which had changed its name to TV ACTION, folded after just over two years of publication. UFO is now being developed as a movie; here's hoping it's as good as Haylock showed it could be!



NEXT: BRIAN LEWIS

ENGLISH & MEDIA STUDIES

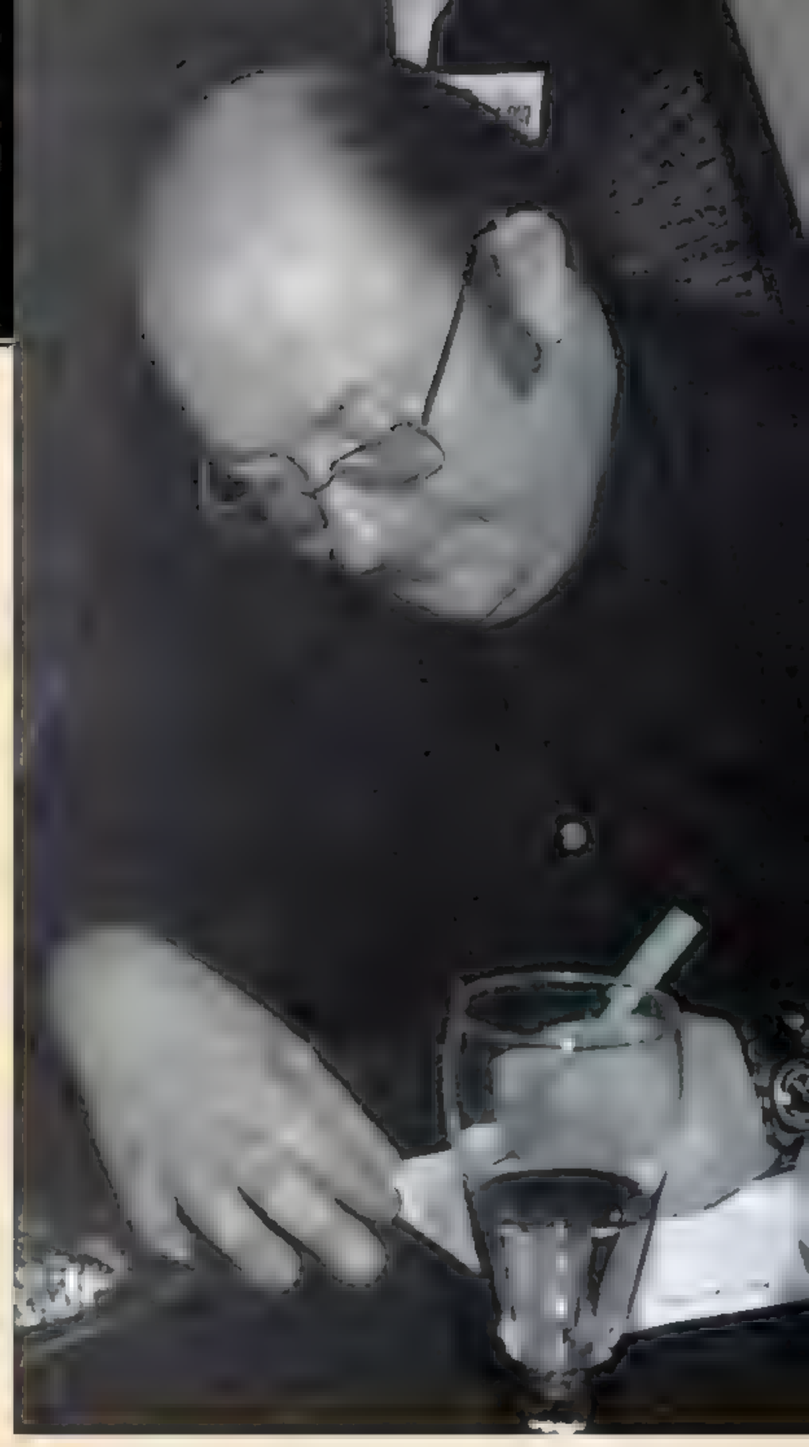
RICHARD STARKI… …ECT OF BRITISH COMIC ART

PART SEVEN

Unlike many of my other favourite artists in the British weekly comic COUNTDOWN, Brian Lewis never really became associated with one strip in particular... in fact it seemed as if editors looked upon him as what American's refer to as a 'fill-in' artist, as his work would turn up one week on CAPTAIN SCARLET then, a few weeks' later on STINGRAY, FIREBALL XL5 or a done-in-one five or six page science fiction story free of any allegiance to a TV show. Whenever Lewis's work did turn up in COUNTDOWN, it really didn't matter which strip he was illustrating as they were all drawn with the same warm detail which could bring as much life to Gerry Anderson's puppets as they brought to an original sci-fi yarn.

Our feature on Brian Lewis originally appeared in ELEPHANTMEN #12

BRIAN LEWIS



might be easy for the casual reader to have missed Brian Lewis's rich contribution to COUNTDOWN as his work was never featured in flashy full colour like the strips created by Embleton, Gerry or Burns; instead Lewis stuck to a beautiful combination of black and white linework, cross hatching and soft grey wash. Even though Lewis was clearly aware of the sexier lighting techniques of his colleagues, he focussed for the most part on strong facial expressions, distinctive figurework and an understanding of texture and rendering that must have left some of his peers slack-jawed with wonder and amazement.

LEFT & BELOW: After Haulace [illegible] on to DOCTOR WHO, Lewis [illegible] his eye for detail to UFO. His understanding of [illegible] and characterisation [illegible]

ABOVE LEFT & NEXT: Lewis's [illegible] from the [illegible] of IAN KENNEDY – original – 2001 A SPACE ODYSSEY and on WARP from SHADOW [illegible] whether you like it or not

6

48

Despite his contributions to COUNTDOWN during its two year run, Brian Lewis is best remembered for the body of work he created for Dez Skinn's HOUSE OF HAMMER/HALLS OF HORROR magazine. I'm guessing that the intent behind the title was to create a uniquely British magazine in the style of the American book FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND. Lewis's gorgeous full colour covers for HOUSE OF HAMMER were a revelation, and further demonstrated Lewis's ability to capture likenesses and atmosphere without losing his unmistakable warmth and style. Were he still alive today, I'm sure he would be in big demand as a cover artist for US mainstream comics.

Brian Lewis's work for HOH didn't stop at the cover... he also adapted a number of movies, including THE QUATERMAS EXPERIMENT, THE REPTILE and THE LEGEND OF THE SEVEN GOLDEN VAMPIRES as well as a number of original strips under the umbrella title VAN HELSING'S TERROR TALES. His incredible linework would have been right at home in any WARREN publication...

In our age of artist sketch blogs and dedicated websites, it's easy to forget that craftsmen like Brian Lewis, who entertained and inspired a whole generation of comic creators, did so with little expectation of the kind of recognition or financial compensation creators take for granted today.

Whenever I'm at a comic book convention, I always seek out artists like William Stout, Mark Schultz and Ernie Chan who sell their own sketchbooks and prints, and spend my, um, pocket money at their tables... but even the concept of selling sketchbooks hadn't taken off in the seventies – look at the two pieces on this page and tell me you wouldn't have wanted to pick up a Brian Lewis sketchbook.

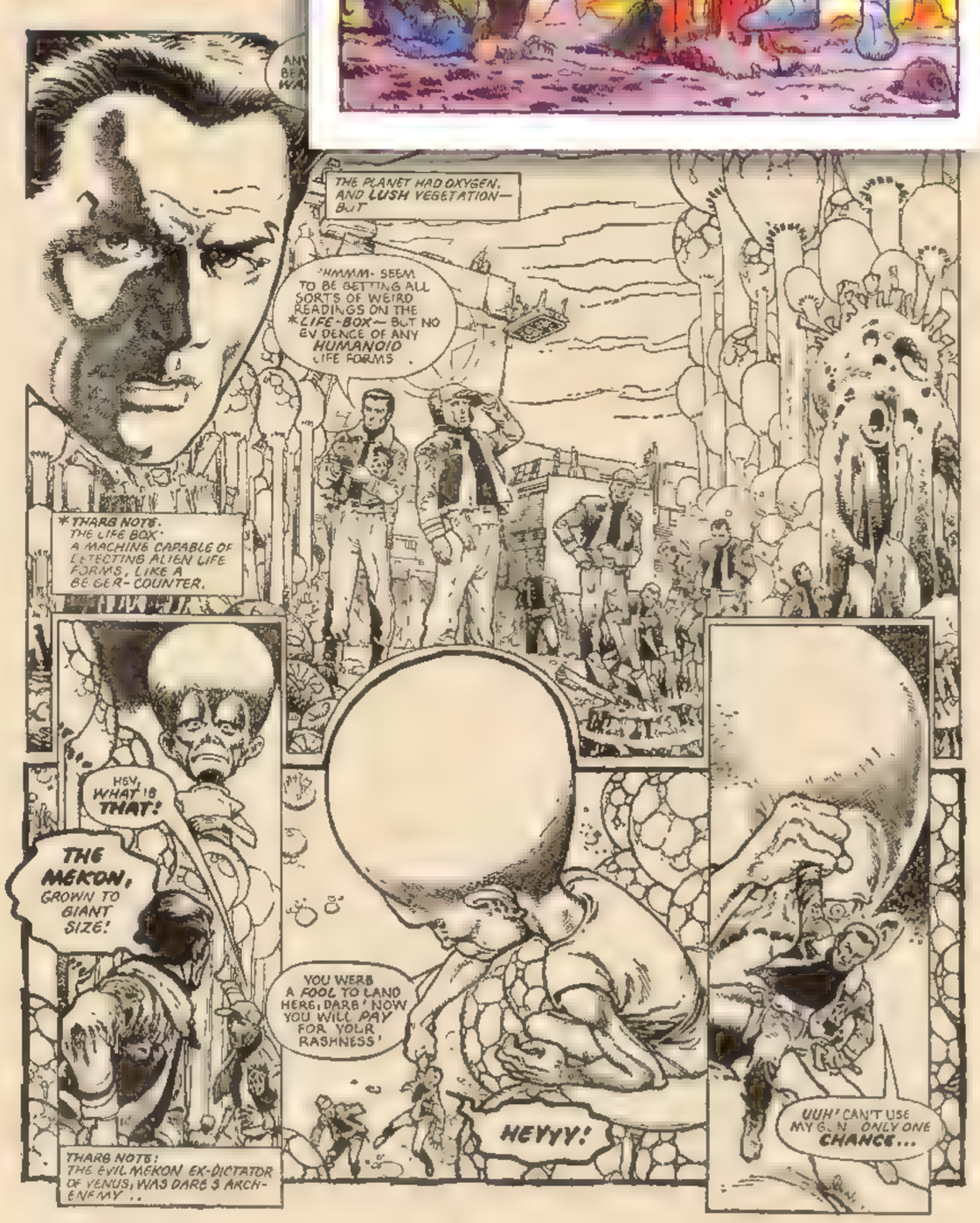
Thanks to THE BOOK PALACE!

At the end of the '70s, science fiction was cool again and Dez Skinn's Quality Comics imprint added STARBURST magazine to its titles. Brian Lewis created the wraparound cover celebrating the release in England of a movie that American readers might recognize. The growing popularity of science fiction in the last quarter of the twentieth century sustained STARBURST across three different publishers and it is still being published today adorned by a logo rendered by yours truly.

STARBURST never ran original cover art again, but that same year my second favourite SF comic, 2000AD, appeared and Brian Lewis's beautiful linework turned up on two covers and a three part DAN DARE strip. This is the last comic strip work that Lewis produced before his death - as distinct & imaginative as the body of work that preceded it.

In a later volume, we'll dip into LOOK-IN and 2000AD!

Rich!



Check out the monthly ELEPHANTMEN comic book from Image Comics for more ENGLISH & MEDIA STUDIES!

ABOUT *the* CREATORS

RICHARD STARKINGS

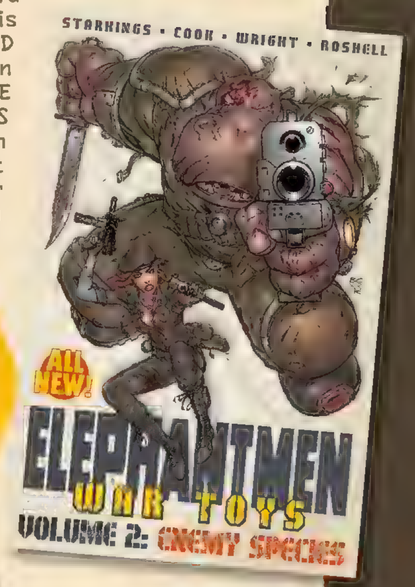
Born and raised in England, Starkings worked for five years at Marvel UK's London offices as editor, designer and occasional writer of ZOIDS, GHOSTBUSTERS, TRANSFORMERS and the DOCTOR WHO comic strip. He is perhaps best known for his work with the award-winning Comicraft design and lettering studio, which he founded in 1992. Starkings & Roshell also co-authored the best-selling books COMIC BOOK LETTERING THE COMICRAFT WAY and TIM SALE: BLACK AND WHITE. Starkings is currently writing the treatment for a movie adaptation of ELEPHANTMEN.

Rich! pickings

Years ago, when I was but a slip of a man, a writer by the name of James Hill accosted me in the Bayswater offices of Marvel UK and asked me what my dream project would be... without hesitation, I responded: "Script by Alan Moore. Art by Brian Bolland." How prophetic! When THE KILLING JOKE was announced and I found myself sitting alongside Brian at the Birmingham Comic Art Show in 1986, I thought 'how could I NOT ask him if he had a letterer in mind...?'

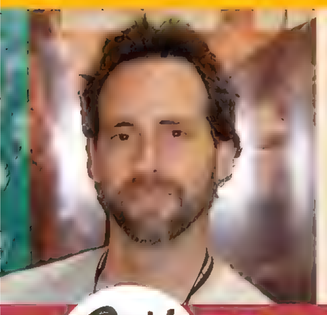
BOO COOK

lives in Brighton, England with his lovely wife Gemma. He has worked on 2000AD for Tharg the Mighty in Blighty for eleven years now, drawing favorites such as JUDGE DREDD, JUDGE ANDERSON, A.B.C WARRIORS and a basketcase of covers including a run on Marvel's X-FACTOR series. If you want to track down a big chunk of Boo, look for the ASYLUM collection, and if it leaves you begging for more, ask him about his creator owned project, BLUNT.



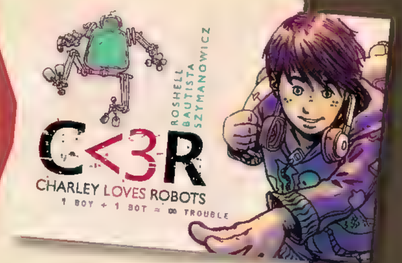
Rich! pickings

I often feel that Drummer, Novelist and Ace Cover Artist Boo Cook gets better and better with every page... and if you want to see Boo firing on ALL cylinders, I simply have to tell you to watch out for the ELEPHANTMEN: WAR TOYS Original Graphic Novel, ENEMY SPECIES, which hits stores in early 2011. His best work to date.



J.G. ROSHELL

a.k.a 'John', a.k.a 'Mr. Fontastic', a.k.a 'Comicraft's Secret Weapon', created many parts of this book. He would tell you more, but two small people are demanding his immediate attention. He hopes to one day take a nap. JG has created fonts, logos, books and websites for hundreds of comics, including ASTRO CITY, DANGER GIRL, MARVELS, STRANGE EMBRACE, LIBERTY COMICS and ELEPHANTMEN.



Rich! pickings

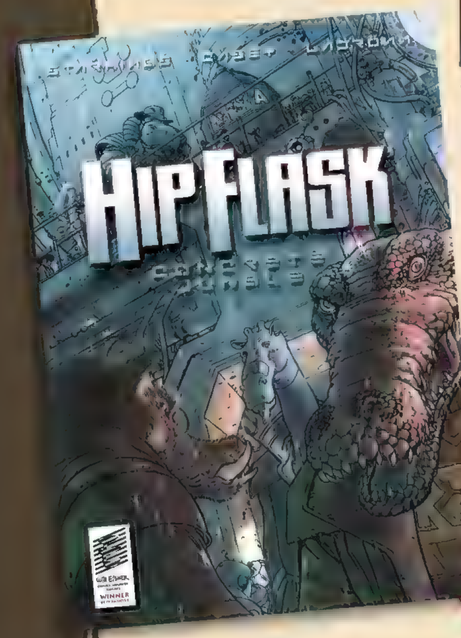
JG has bugged me about making ELEPHANTMEN more family friendly since issue #1. "No, JG." I says. "This is a comic full of guns and boobs! It's not for your kids!" Undeterred, JG now has his very own creator-owned series, CHARLEY LOVES ROBOTS, which will feature in the back of every issue of ELEPHANTMEN from #77 on. Illustrated by Andre Szymanowicz & Gabriel Bautista. Fun for all ages, bound to be a major motion picture, but personally I think it could benefit from an occasional... just an occasional! - nip slip

MORITAT

a.k.a 'Justin Norman' was born in Mongolia. He is the artist of STRAY MOONBEAMS, ATTRACTIVE FORCES, THE 3RD DEGREE, SOLSTICE and DC's THE SPIRIT.

Rich! pickings

I might never have got to work with Morrie, or spent so many Tuedays with him, had our mutual friend and frequent accomplice, Steve Seagle (don't call him Hard to Kill!) hadn't asked me to collect the series they did together in the 90's, SOLSTICE. A couple of pages of art were missing from the last issue (which had never been published) but when I told Moritat, he re-created them – seemingly effortlessly – over a weekend. When I then lettered the book I was able to clearly see the range and accomplishment of his work, and he quickly became my first choice to illustrate ELEPHANTMEN. Look for SOLSTICE in your LCBS or online bookseller named after another of Steve Seagle's (don't say he's Under Seige!) mini series, AMAZON.



LADRÖNN

was born and raised in Veracruz, Mexico, and never considered creating comics, especially not for the American market, until after he visited the San Diego Comic Con in 1995. His incredible painted work was first published in a short story for the THOR 2000 Annual before he started work on THE INHUMANS. He was twice nominated for Eisner awards for his work on HIP FLASK, and finally received the Eisner award for best painter for HIP FLASK: MYSTERY CITY (collected by Image Comics in HIP FLASK: CONCRETE JUNGLE). His covers have recently graced DC's GREEN ARROW/BLACK CANARY and THE SPIRIT, and he is currently working on HIP FLASK: OUROBOROUS.

HIP FLASK: CONCRETE JUNGLE collecting his Eisner nominated work for HIP FLASK: ELEPHANTMEN and his Eisner Award-winning work for HIP FLASK: MYSTERY CITY. 'Nuff Said!

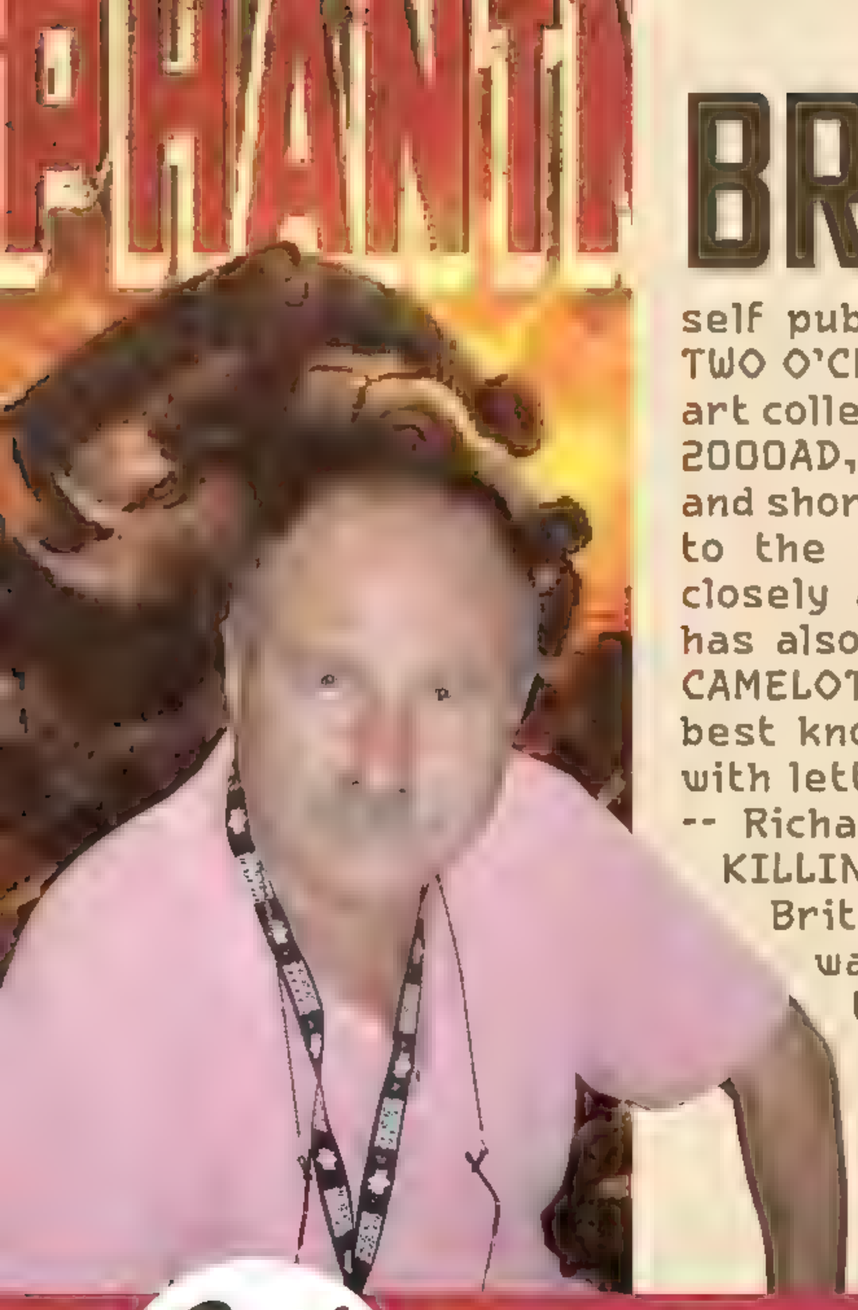
Rich! pickings

IAN CHURCHILL

left a career in graphic design to work professionally in comics in 1994, when he was hired on the spot at a London comic convention by Marvel's editor-in-chief at the time, Bob Harras. Alongside Jeph Loeb, Churchill took Marvel's X-Men title, CABLE to new heights shortly before Joe Casey and Ladrönn created their memorable run on the book. Before launching his own creator owned series with Image, Churchill illustrated THE AVENGERS, UNCANNY X-MEN, SUPERMAN, COVEN and a certain character by the name of HIP FLASK - Huzzah!

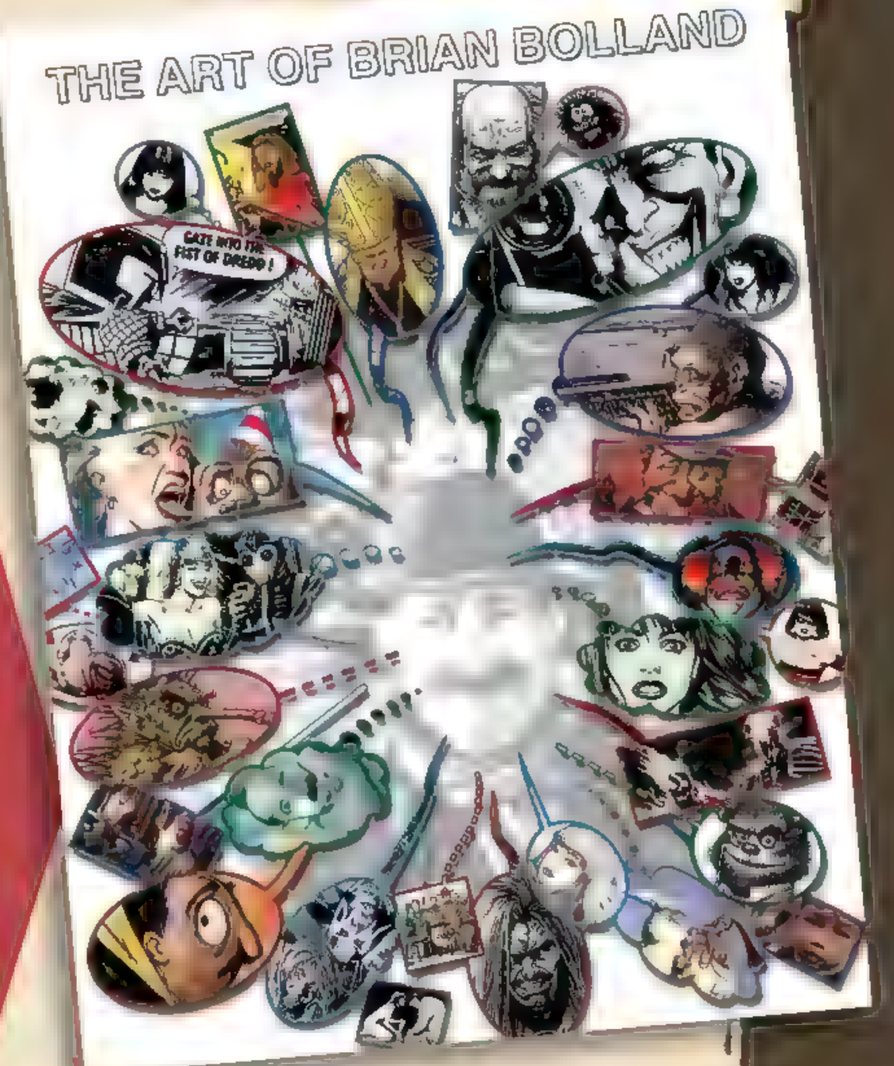
As much as I loved Ian's work on HIP FLASK and CABLE, you cannot find a book that Ian has put more of his heart and soul in than MARINE MAN. Every page is full of joy, look for new issues at your local comic book store every month!

Rich! pickings



BRIAN BOLLAND

self published his first comics work, SUDDENLY AT TWO O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING shortly after he left art college in 1974. He is best known for his work on 2000AD, for which he illustrated a string of covers and short stories before eventually being assigned to the strip with which he would become most closely associated, JUDGE DREDD. Bolland's work has also graced the pages of MYSTERY IN SPACE, CAMELOT 3000 and DETECTIVE COMICS, but he is best known for his collaboration, heh, with letterer -- and HIP FLASK creator -- Richard Starkings, on BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE, written by some other British guy who probably wouldn't want to be named as the author of the work any moore, um, more. If you haven't already tracked down Brian's STRIPS or Image's huge THE ART OF BRIAN BOLLAND, do so immediately -- and don't forget to lick every page.



Rich! pickings

Brian's cover art for Eagle Comics' JUDGE DREDD series, Vertigo's THE INVISIBLES and DC's WONDER WOMAN, THE FLASH and GOTHAM KNIGHTS are all gems, but before I even knew Brian's name, the covers he created that struck me the most didn't focus on iconic characters at all. The one featured here is the cover of 2000AD prog 27 from gasp! 1977, and I chose it over many other great Bolland covers partly because it sucks you in but also because it features a frog. Look at the entirety of Brian's work and see how many frogs you can find.

TOM SCIOLI

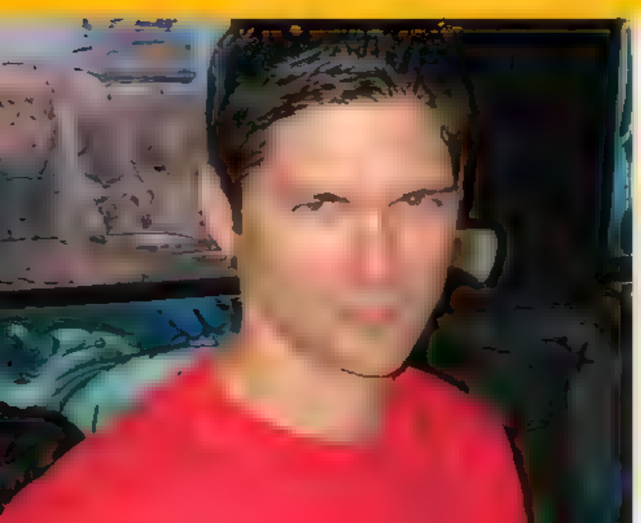
loves comic books, especially old ones. He likes the thin application of flat color on yellowed newsprint. The smell of comic books is really nice, too, somewhere between chocolate and lemon juice. He also makes comic books. He's very proud of his comics, which include GØDLAND, AMERICAN BARBARIAN, THE INCREDIBLES, FREEDOM FORCE and THE FANTASTIC FOUR, but wishes they smelled like the old ones do.

NICK FILARDI

graduated from Savannah College of Art and Design in 2004 and began coloring for Zylonol Studios in Savannah, GA. Currently living in Philadelphia with his three-legged dog, Deniro, he has also coloured 24 SEVEN, GØDLAND, PIRATES OF CONEY ISLAND, and CROSS BRONX.

Rich! pickings

Tom Scioli's art is both Jacktastic and Kirbyrific... he is a veritable drawing machine and somehow manages to turn out a whole issue (pencils AND inks, PLUS covers!) of GØDLAND every month while holding down a steady job as well. I have to showcase the GØDLAND CELESTIAL EDITION VOLUME 1 here, partly because it's AWESOME, partly because I designed it, but mostly because it's my pick for Joe and Nick as well!



JOE CASEY

has written a LOT of comics. CABLE with Ladrönn, WILDCATS with Sean Phillips, CODEFLESH with Charlie Adlard, THE MILKMAN MURDERS with Steve Parkhouse, UNCANNY X-MEN with Ian Churchill and, more recently, NIXON'S PALS and OFFICER DOWNE with Chris Burnham. He usually wears shades.

HENRY FLINT

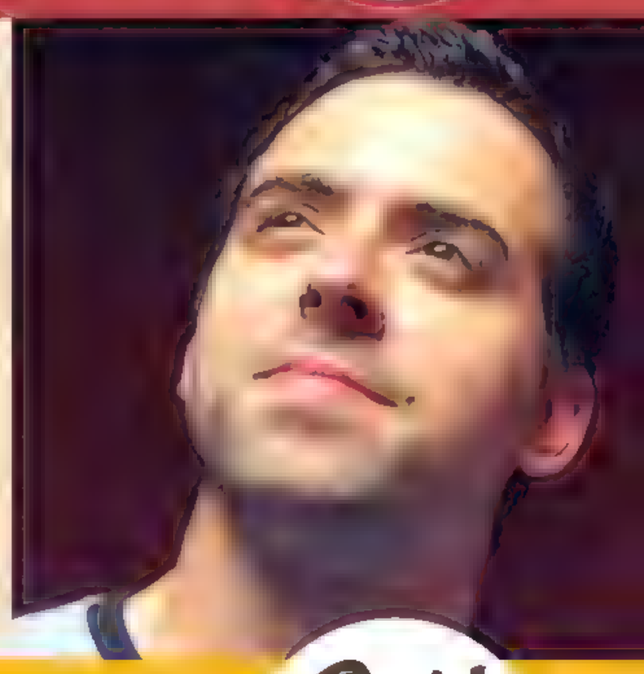
has filled us with Thrill Power for 2000AD since 1995 on such characters as JUDGE DREDD, NEMESIS THE WARLOCK, SHAKARA, ABC WARRIORS, LOW LIFE and ZOMBO. Winner of Best Comic Artist in the 2004 UK National Comics Awards, Flint has also worked on OMEGA MEN and THE HAUNTED TANK for DC comics.

Henry's work on JUDGE DREDD/ALIENS is not to be missed (look for it in hardcover on Amazon.co.uk and check out the SHAKARA hardcover too) but for me nothing says 2000AD like the cover featured here. /ARTAZ/

Rich! pickings

JOE MADUREIRA

became one of the industry's most popular artists working on UNCANNY X-MEN. Joe's Marvel-meets-manga-via-Disney creator-owned series BATTLE CHASERS helped launch Image Comics' CLIFFHANGER imprint before Joe left comics to design videogames. Happily, 'Joe Mad' returned to comics in 2008 for a jaw-dropping stint on ULTIMATES by that Jeph Loeb guy.



In addition to a logo designed by yours-truly, BATTLE CHASERS had everything; swords, spaceships, robots, werewolves and a red-headed babe! It was CONAN-meets-X-MEN-in-a-STAR-WARS-videogame. What's NOT to love? Now available as an oversized Image hardcover! Mind you, we ARE still waiting for issue #10, Joe.

Rich! pickings

DAVE STEWART

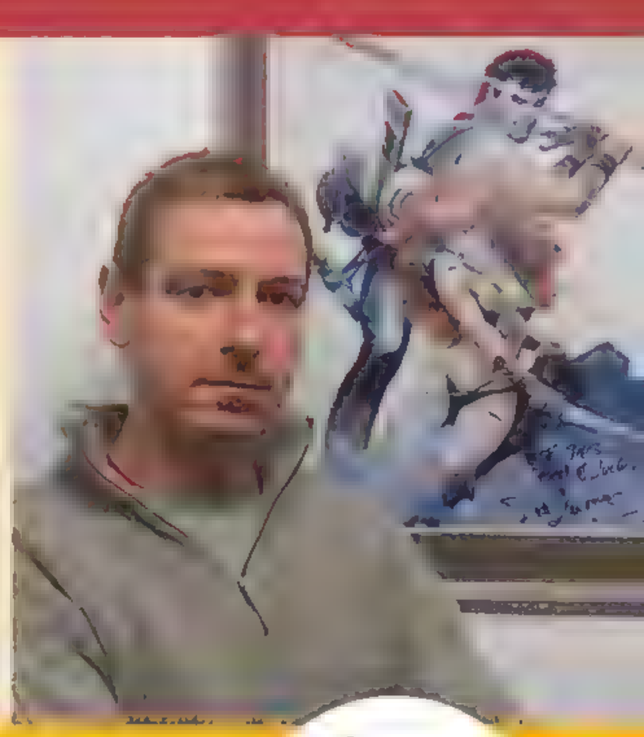
started his comics career as a design intern at Dark Horse, and is now the award-winning colorist of HELLBOY, SUPERMAN, BATMAN and many, many other books. In addition to coloring some of the best artists in comics, he practices kung fu, speaks Cherokee, and raises Chihuahuas, which makes him a cross-cultural triple threat in his native state of Idaho.

I was unaware of Dave's work until Steve Buccellato, a top colorist himself, called it out to me. Suddenly everyone was talking about Dave's colours and Tim Sale signed him up for CATWOMAN: WHEN IN ROME. But it's his work on Dark Horse's CONAN reboot that knocks my socks off – don't call it colouring, it's painting! PLUS: the TOWER OF THE ELEPHANT collection features covers and Elephant God designs by Ladrönn! How did that happen?

Rich! pickings

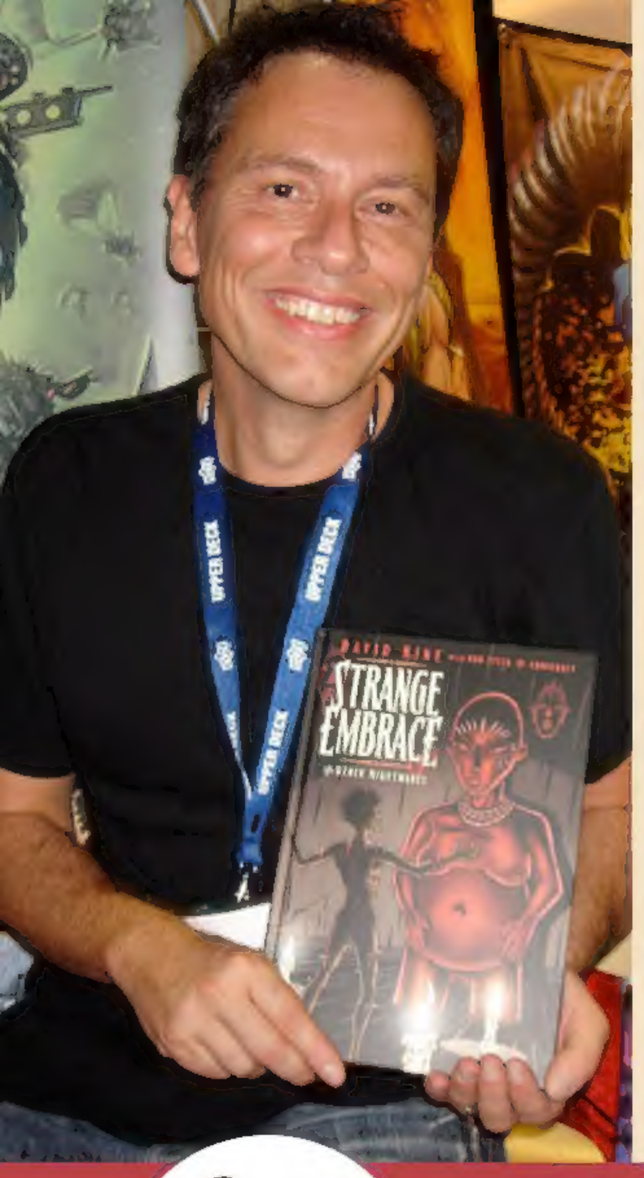
CHRIS WESTON

cemented his desire to become a science fiction comic strip artist when he discovered 2000AD. In a bizarre twist of fate, he lived near the late Don Lawrence - creator of THE TRIGAN EMPIRE - who offered Chris an apprenticeship. After spending time illustrating JUDGE DREDD, NEMESIS, ROGUE TROOPER and NIKOLAI DANTE, he has more recently plied his trade on this side of the Atlantic, working on THE FILTH, BATMAN and THE INVISIBLES. It remains his life-long ambition to draw DAN DARE, PILOT OF THE FUTURE.



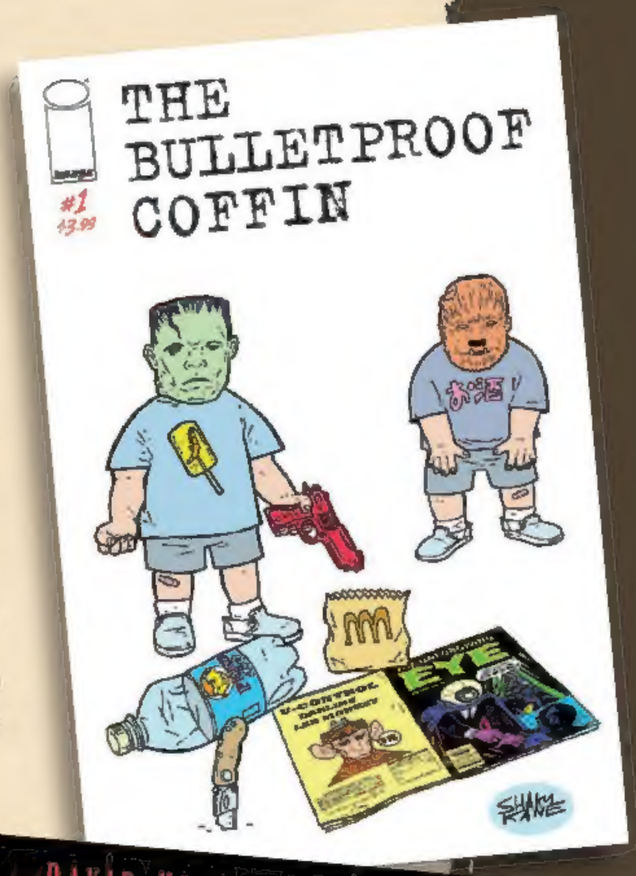
Chris Weston's love for British comics, and particularly for the art of Frank Hampson, Don Lawrence and Brian Bolland drips from every page of his work on MINISTRY OF SPACE. If you grew up loving Pulp Science Fiction and in awe of NASA's space program you've got to get your hands on this book. Track down the collection at your local comic book store or on Amazon.com and LICK every page!

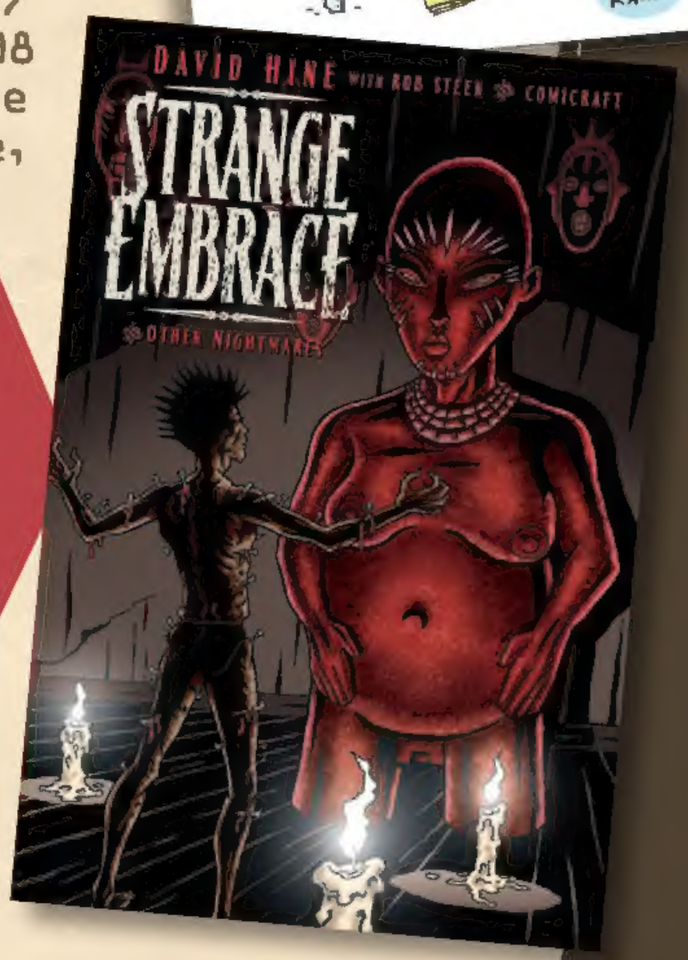
Rich! pickings



DAVID HINE

has been working in comics since the late 1980s. After creating a name for himself at Marvel UK as an inker on projects such as ZOIDS, SLEEZE BROTHERS and, sorry, Dave, CARE BEARS, he wisely fled licensed comics for CRISIS, for which he drew the series STICKY FINGERS, written by Myra Hancock, and for 2000 AD he drew TAO DE MOTO, also written by Hancock and he wrote and drew the futuristic police series MAMBO. STRANGE EMBRACE was originally published in black and white as a miniseries by Tundra, but it was the publication of the, now-hard-to-find, collected edition by Active Images which led to his current career as a writer at Marvel Comics on titles such as DISTRICT X/ MUTOPIA X, DAREDEVIL: REDEMPTION, THE 198 and SILENT WAR. Be sure and check out his Image Comics series with UK comics legend Shaky Kane, THE BULLETPROOF COFFIN.



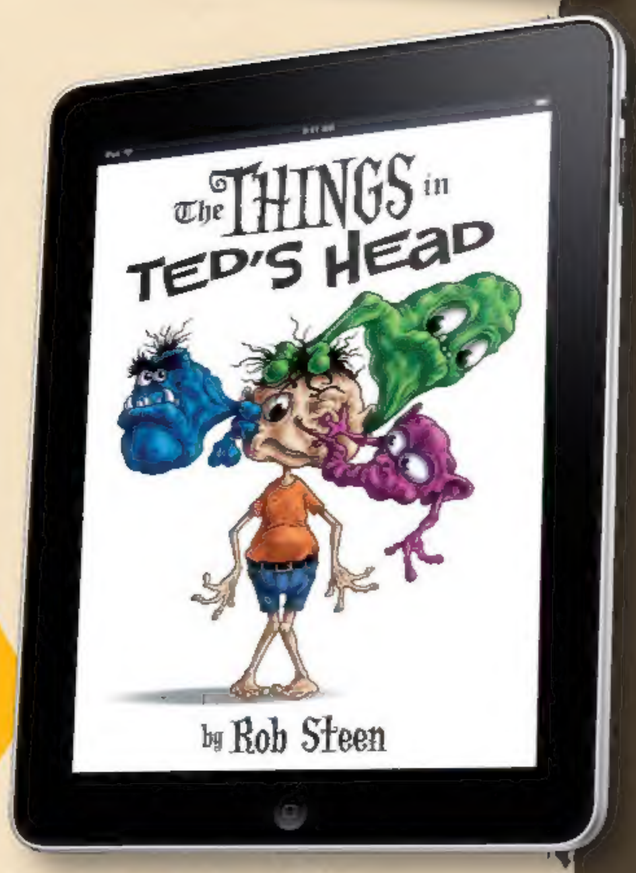


Rich! pickings

Dave's biggest and best work – listed in Paul Gravett's book GRAPHIC NOVELS as one of the top 100 graphic novels of all time – was recently put back into print by Image Comics. Digitally remastered, coloured by FLANIMALS co-creator Rob Steen and lettered and designed by those awfully nice chaps at Comicraft, STRANGE EMBRACE AND OTHER NIGHTMARES is a modern gothic psycho-sexual tortured romance and is not for the nervous!

ROB STEEN

arrived at his current profession in illustration after careers as a musician, morgue technician, record store clerk and graphic designer. After graduating from The University of Comicraft under the guidance of Professor Richard Starkings, he eventually settled on a sedentary life of drawing. For the last few years he has devoted his life to the study of Flanimals, which have produced five books so far, with the latest, FLANIMALS POP-UP, now available in all good bookstores. He lives in New York with his wife Jill and demented cat Minnie.



Rich! pickings

Ted has three unwanted lodgers, but they're not in his house. Unfortunately they've taken up residence in his head, and they don't plan on moving out any time soon... Rob's newest book isn't a book -- it's an APP! Download all 32 pages for just 99c at the iTunes Store.

J. SCOTT CAMPBELL

was initially discovered in the first Homage Studios talent search. His dynamic storytelling and animated style lent themselves perfectly to the smash-hit series GEN13 and his own DANGER GIRL. Campbell resides in Colorado where he's currently drawing a highly anticipated SPIDER-MAN project for Marvel, with some guy named Loeb, and finishing the final two issues of his creator-owned series WILDSIDERZ for DC Comics.

Rich! pickings

If you like DANGER GIRL, get ahold of Jeff's recent FAIRY TALE FANTASIES CALENDARS — good clean fun with girls and fantastic creatures. 'Nuff Said!

JOE KELLY

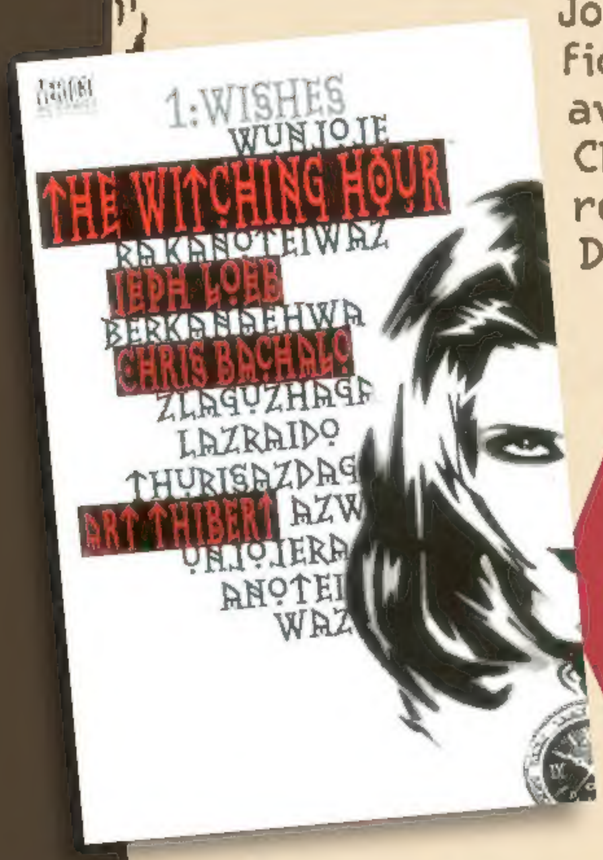
is a New York based writer working in comic books and animation. His runs on X-MEN, ACTION COMICS, SUPERGIRL, JLA and SPACE GHOST stand as exceptional works of genre-busting and emotional subterfuge, according to his elementary school aged children, and a hot dog vendor who bears a remarkable resemblance to Orson Welles. His writing for animation is pretty darn good too, and gets better all the time. Joe is 1/4 of MAN OF ACTION Studios, the creative juggernaut responsible for life-changing-mega-hit BEN 10 on CARTOON NETWORK. By most accounts his life is swell, bordering on rapturous.

Long before Joe Kelly even dreamed about CAPTAIN STONEHEART AND THE TRUTH FAIRY (also available as an oversized hardcover with a CD reading), he had us in stitches with his time-warping send up of SPIDER-MAN #47 in DEADPOOL #11, for which he won a much-coveted COMICOAF award. Track it down in the back issue boxes at your friendly neighborhood comic book store and while you're at it, pick up ACTION COMICS #775, Kelly's best issue and one of the finest SUPERMAN stories ever told.

Rich! pickings

CHRIS BACHALO

was born in Portage La Prairie, Canada, and is recognized internationally as one of the most popular artists in the comic industry today. His work for DC"s VERTIGO imprint on titles such as SHADE, SANDMAN and DEATH, THE HIGH COST OF LIVING, earned critical acclaim and the attention of MARVEL COMICS where he co-created the quirky pop favorite GENERATION X with writer Scott Lobdell. Following an invitation to create a title for Wildstorm's CLIFFHANGER imprint, Bachalo and STONEHEART author Joe Kelly co-created STEAMPUNK, a retro-techno, science fiction fantasy epic -- the first two volumes are currently available from DC Comics; write to them and beg for more! Chris is currently the regular penciler on X-MEN, and resides in Southern California with his wife, Helen, son, Dylan and his Siamese fighting fish, Spike.

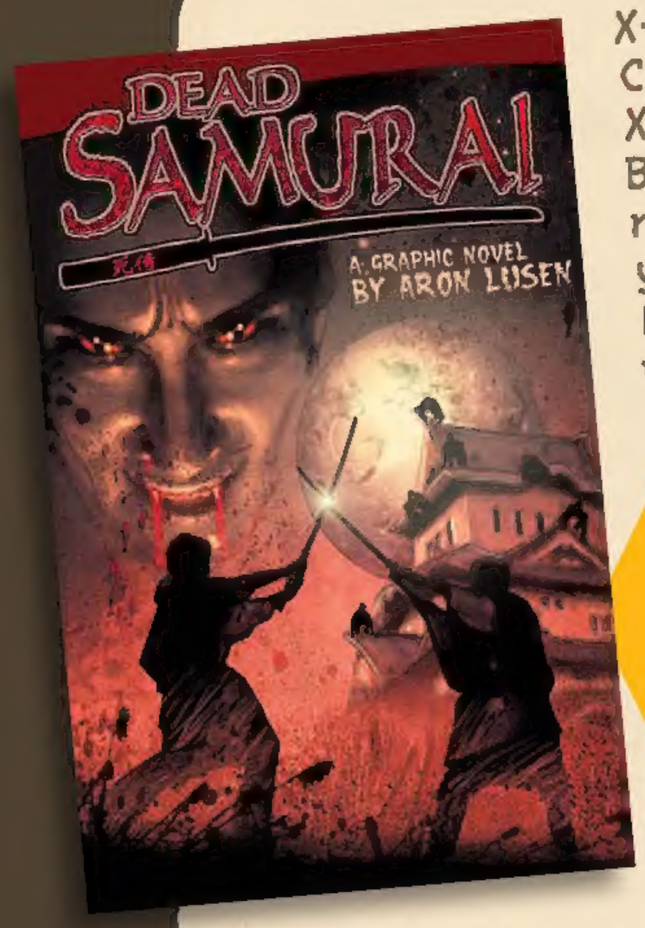


As much as I loved working on STEAMPUNK with Chris & Joe, Chris's work on DC's three issue series THE WITCHING HOUR, written by my good friend Jeph 'HULK' Loeb, still holds a special place in my heart. In my estimation Jeph has never written anything more original or more honest than he did for this creator-owned series... perhaps one day we,'ll see more. The innovative flashback sequences told in storybook form were a terrific showcase for Chris's amazing imagination and very much the inspiration for the presentation of CAPTAIN STONEHEART. You can find THE WITCHING HOUR collected in hardcover or trade, but I preferred to hang on to the three individual issues with covers designed by Comicraft's own secret weapon, JG.

Rich! pickings

ARON LUSEN

is not only the creator and writer of E.V.E. PROTOMECHA published by IMAGE COMICS in trade paperback in 1999 - and still available on Amazon.com - but also one of the founders of the award winning LIQUID! GRAPHICS studio, often described as the Industrial Light and Magic of comic book coloring. Alongside his LIQUID! co-founder, Chris Lichtner, Aron's work has graced the pages of UNCANNY X-MEN, THE FANTASTIC FOUR and Joe Madureira's BATTLE CHASERS. Aron's work over Salvador Larroca's pencils on XTREME X-MEN made him the perfect choice to color Chris Bachalo's pencils for CAPTAIN STONEHEART - I'm sure readers will agree that his colours for that issue make you want to lick every page! Aron is currently working for GOOGLE in Southern California, but if we told you what he was doing there, well, we'd have to kill you.



Written AND Illustrated by Aron – is there anything this guy CAN'T do?!? – DEAD SAMURAI is the story of a town without hope, men with no honor and a hero with no memory. If you haven't seen volume one of DEAD SAMURAI yet, track down a copy for yourself and buy several copies for friends. Easily one of my favorite comics of 2005, I'm eagerly looking forward to volume two, and not only because I get to letter it!

Rich! pickings

FOR MY DAUGHTER, SAVANNAH! I LOVE YOU!

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and LADRÖNN

Introduction by JONATHAN ROSS

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PRINTED IN KOREA
$19.99
ISBN: 978-1-60706-337-7
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